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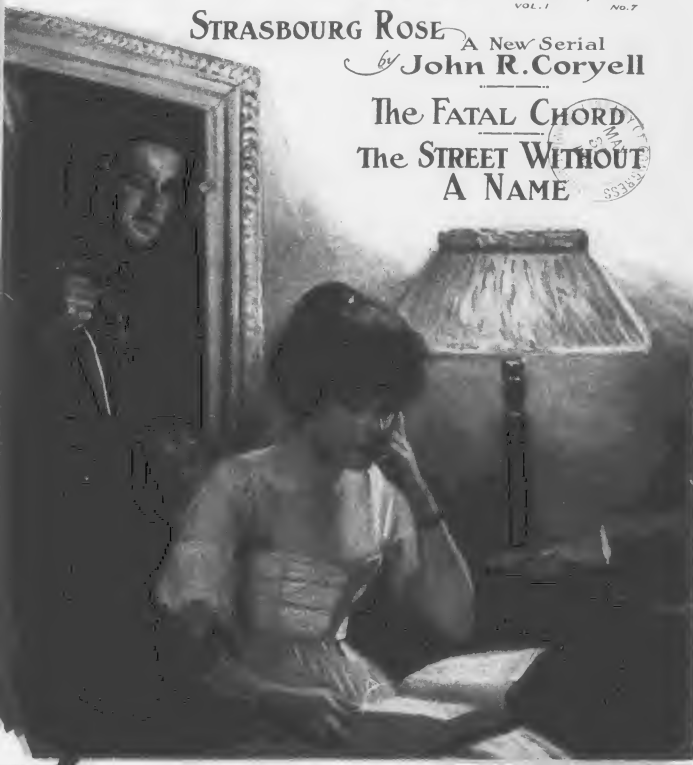
STRASBOURG ROSE

A New Serial

by John R. Coryell

The FATAL CHORD

The STREET WITHOUT
A NAME



THE THRILL BOOK

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Strasbourg By Rose John R. Coryell

CHAPTER I.

THE opening of hostilities found young Doctor Merrill in Vienna, where he had gone to finish his studies, but where he had remained for two years, the wonder and admiration of his colleagues, who admitted that in his specialty of nose and throat he was better fitted to teach than to learn. They called him a genius. As a diagnostician he seemed inspired; as an operating surgeon he was a marvel.

In the operating room he was a man of ice and authority, his words few, his tone peremptory, his movements swift and sure. Out of the operating room he was genial and retiring, and would have been in no way unusual but for his body of an athlete and for the virile force that seemed to fairly flow from him.

He had galloped through Harvard in three years, had gone through Harvard Medical, had had two years post-graduate at Johns-Hopkins, and now had had two years in Vienna; and he was only twenty-seven! "It is only an American who could do it," one of his middle-aged colleagues had said of him.

"The explanation," said the worldly wise dean of the profession, "is that he cares for nothing, thinks of nothing but his work. Women do not interest him; he drinks two glasses—just two glasses—of light, dry wine a day; he smokes two cigars. He is hardly human; his wonderful physique, that he takes such precious care of, is of value only as an adjunct to his brain. He is a master when at his age he should be an apprentice. I have seen our beautiful Viennese



women try all their lures on him; the sole response he gives them is a pleasant smile. He is not a man; he is a brain."

Another declared: "His nerves are iron, his muscles are steel, his blood is ice water."

If Merrill had known what they said he would have smiled indulgently. Of course women didn't interest him; they were a mere disturbance, not even a distraction.

When the war broke out he postponed his return to America until the rushing, frightened throngs of travelers ceased to crowd the boats. He was in no hurry and could wait. Meanwhile, he went to Ber-

lin, where his fame had preceded him, and where he found many interesting cases sent back from the front.

He was only mildly interested in the war; it was no business of his. He was sentimentally attached to France, but he took the German view of the whole affair. He had a mind to wait until the war was over. The victorious German army would soon be in Paris, and that would be the beginning of the end. He was sorry for France, but she should not have been the aggressor. Then came the battle of the Marne, and presently the beaten German army had settled down in trenches; and the war promised to prolong itself for another six months.

It was in a distinctly pro-German frame of mind that Merrill left Berlin to go home by way of Belgium and Holland. Not only had he his passport, but because of his indubitable leaning toward German kultur, he had letters from some very exalted personages; moreover, he traveled in company with the Herr Doktor Grieffenhausen, one of the most eminent surgeons of the empire.

The German mind is so peculiar that it never occurred to Grieffenhausen, nor yet to the army officers with whom they came in contact, that so thoroughly pro-German an American as the self-contained young surgeon could see things differently from themselves; so he was permitted to see Belgium as it was. It was sad, of course, but Belgium had foolishly obstructed the passage of the German army, and she had to be punished in such a way that she would never be so unreasonable again.

So he saw Liege, Namur, Tirlémont, and Louvain, and all the country between. He saw such horror, such unbelievable atrocity, such monstrous devastation that he reached Brussels at last, so sick with the accumulation of dreadful sights, so full of loathing of everything German that he wished nothing so much as to get away from where he would ever again see a complacent German face or hear the sound of their childishly grandiloquent phrases.

He was in this mood of reaction against Germany and things German when the incident happened that shook the very foundations of his life.

He refused to go with Grieffenhausen to the big, luxurious hotel where he was assured quarters would be found for him, giving as a reason that he preferred the quiet of a little private hotel he knew of near the Grand' Place, and added that he meant to remain in Brussels the shortest possible time.

"But you will return to us," Grieffenhausen said, holding his hand so sentimentally that Merrill was afraid he was going to embrace him. "You will return when the war is over. It will not last long. But for the blunder of Von Kluck we would be in Paris now and would hold the Channel ports. I invite you to dine with me in Paris on Christmas. Ah! Who can long resist the magnificent German army? It is a wonderful Germany you will see when you return. And you will come, for nowhere can such genius as yours be appreciated as here. I say here, for this now is a part of the great Germany, the Germany which shall rule the world. *Auf wiedersehen*, then, my friend! If you have any trouble about your *pass*, do not forget that I am here, and our friend, the Herr

Oberst von Schilling. You know what German kultur is; tell your countrymen. It is our purpose that all the world shall benefit from the blessings of our kultur."

"Be assured," Merrill said gravely, "that I will speak from my experience; that I will tell what I have seen with my own eyes, what I have heard with my own ears."

"That will carry conviction," cried Grieffenhausen in delight. "Well, *auf wiedersehen*!"

With a deep breath of relief Merrill took his place in the automobile which the imperious word of the mighty General von Schilling had procured for him, and was taken, with his luggage, to the little Hotel des Boulevards, where he had stopped once before. The *patronne* did not remember him, but her sad face lighted up when she discovered that he was an American, and she readily gave him the best room she had. He unpacked only the few things he needed from his suit case, shaved, and made ready to go to the legation to have his passport viséed.

Brussels, which had once been one of the most joyous cities in the world, was now so glum and silent that it weighed on his spirits. The occupying army made noise enough as it went its way in the streets with rattling sabers and arrogant mien, but the inhabitants were sullen and voiceless. Hatred smoldered in their downcast eyes. Merrill felt that he couldn't get away from there soon enough.

He nodded to the concierge when he reached the entrance court and stood in the wide, open doorway and looked up and down the narrow street. A woman turned the nearest corner and instantly broke into a swift run, turning her head from side to side as if seeking shelter.

She carried a bag in her hand, and he could see that she was young. The hot blood surged to his head. "The beasts!" he muttered. "Are they after her here in the very streets of Brussels?" He had seen enough on his journey to know that brutal ravishment was a part of the German system of punishment.

The girl started at sight of him, then took a second glance and ran straight to him, pushing him back into the entrance court. "You are American?" she panted, half in query, half in assertion.

"Yes," he answered.

"You live here?"

"Yes, I have just arrived."

She was very beautiful, and her great gray eyes were fixed on him in passionate appeal. "You will save me? They are after me. Oh! Quick, quick!"

"What shall I do?"

She hesitated for a moment as if in doubt, but the sound of heavy, hurrying footsteps decided her. "Say I am your wife; take me to your room. Quick! Quick!"

A swift consciousness of the danger to himself flashed into his brain, but there wasn't an instant of indecision. "Come!" he said, and snatched the key of his room from the rack where he had just hung it and darted up the stairs.

A glance at the concierge told him that she had seen, but was going on with her sewing as if indifferent. There had been no time for explanations, however.

His room was on the second landing, and as he

opened the door he heard rough voices speaking in guttural tones in the entrance court. The girl heard, too, and pushed past him into the room, drew him in, and softly closed the door, after taking the key out of the lock on the outside. She put the key in on the inside and locked the door.

She had evidently collected herself, for she immediately acted with decision and precision. She began to tear off her hat and outer garments, talking in a whisper, breathless but assured, "Sit down and smoke as if we had been here some time."

He threw his hat on the bed, and with admirable presence of mind cut off a third of his cigar and lighted it. He threw the match and bit of cigar under the grate and covered them with ashes. She smiled and nodded, steadied by his readiness.

Flushing, but without indecision, she tore off her waist and skirt, exposing her white, rounded arms and snowy throat. She flashed one glance at him, but that was all. He sat in an upholstered chair, his legs crossed, smoking leisurely and complacently. "You can trust me," he said quietly.

"*Dieu merci*," she murmured in French, and added in English: "I do."

She gathered up the clothing she had taken off and hung it on some hooks along the wall, putting a few things under the mattress. She opened her bag, pulled out clothing, and threw it on the bed to look as if she had just taken it off. She put a comb and brush and other toilet articles on the bureau. Now she quickly let her hair down—a brown, wavy mass—and began to brush it.

Even in the midst of the perils that threatened, Merrill had watched her with a quickened heartbeat. However forced and tragic the relation, the intimacy of it affected him strangely. That she was pure as well as beautiful he never doubted.

He couldn't fathom the future to know what the end of the adventure would be, but he had made up his mind that as he had entered on it, he would see it through to the end. A sudden thought came to him and he took from his little finger a plain gold ring.

"My mother's wedding ring," he said; "put it on."

She turned swiftly. "*Mon Dieu*," she breathed, "but you are a noble gentleman. Ah, you are an American; that says it all. But wait! I was impetuous and I called on you as a drowning man catches at a straw. You must know what you are doing, however. I am a spy: If the Boches get me I shall be shot. If you help me and we are found out, you, too, will be shot."

"That will be unpleasant for both of us," he answered, pushing the ring on the girl's finger and noting the aristocratic beauty of her hand; "so we must not be caught. My name is Hayden Merrill, called Den for short. I am a surgeon, and have been for two years past in Vienna, and a short time in Berlin. Perhaps you came over to meet me on my way home and were caught by the war."

"You really will see it through?" she demanded.

All this while the sounds of her pursuers in the house were growing more and more audible.

Merrill smiled. "Certainly. Don't waste time on that. They will be here soon. You realize you are not on my passport."

"I destroyed my passport. I had to; it was forged." She turned her head, listening. Her face paled and set. "They are trying every room. They will soon be here." She took her place in front of the mirror again. "My name is—— No, it is better not. What shall my name be?"

"Rose."

Her gray eyes widened with a startled expression. "*Mon Dieu*, but that is my name! How did you——"

"I didn't know. It suited you, that is all." He noted her look of suspicion. "You must believe me; I didn't know. How should I?" It gave him an unreasonable satisfaction to know what her name was.

"It is very strange," she sighed after a searching glance at him. "But, yes, I believe you. Give me a very American name."

"Mollie, then; it was my mother's name."

"Mollie," she repeated in a low tone. "You loved your mother very much, I think."

"She was the only woman I ever loved."

"You are not married?"

"Not until now," he answered with a smile.

"You are very brave that you can jest at such a time," she cried quickly as the sounds of the trampling feet, the rough, imperious voice of the leader came nearer. "You perhaps do not yet realize how serious it is. It is death, you understand. It is not too late to change your mind." She faltered and flushed. "You could say you thought me a—a woman of the streets."

He flung his hand out angrily. "I tell you it is settled. You are wearing my mother's wedding ring. I will save you or I will go with you; but I shall save you. This is our story: You came to meet me, you remained a while in England and came to Holland; then you came here. How did you come from Holland?"

"To Antwerp, and so here."

"And your passport we destroyed when you joined me, not knowing the importance of keeping it. Leave it to me, Mollie. I have some standing among the Germans. Be a brave girl and we shall win through."

"I shall be brave when the time comes; it is this waiting that is so hard. And they are such beasts. Besides I have dragged you into it. You see, I lost my head when they were after me. After all, it is a new experience for me. I never dreamed of such work; then the information came to me by chance—information that will mean so much to France—and I had to undertake it; I must get it through to our army. My life was nothing to risk— Ah, *mon Dieu*, now they come to our door!"

The door of the adjoining room had slammed, and the heavy footfalls came along the hall, hobnailed shoes scraping on the waxed floor. The girl clenched the hairbrush in her hand and held it suspended for a moment, a look of utter terror in her distended eyes. Then, with a startling suddenness, she broke into a merry laugh and cried out in a loud voice: "But, Den, my dear, you are so funny; I am hurrying as fast as I can."

"Hurry faster then," he said, laughing in his turn.

There had been a pause outside of the door as if to listen; then came a loud, peremptory knock, and a rough voice cried out in German, at the same time

that a hand turned the knob and pushed heavily: "Open! Open quickly!"

Merrill sprang up and went to the door, trying to act as he supposed a veritable young American who had his wife with him would act.

"Who are you?" he demanded in an angry tone. "Why should I open the door? This is my room. My wife is dressing. Go away or I will report you."

The response in German and the imperious tone had their effect on the speaker outside, for he moderated his voice and manner at once. "You must open, and at once. I have authority to break down your door. Immediately, you understand."

"Don't hesitate," the girl said.

He understood the advantage of seeming to fear nothing, and at once turned the key and opened the door. He stepped back before the entrance of the leader, and with a little cry of shame and distress the girl ran to him and threw herself into his arms. Merrill snatched up a towel and threw it over her bare shoulders.

"What do you mean by such intrusion?" Merrill demanded angrily. "Have you no shame, no decency? I will report you to my friend General von Schilling."

The man advanced into the room with a half-suspicious, half-deprecating expression on his sharp-featured, cunning face. Manifestly he was not of the army, although he had an escort of a corporal and three soldiers, who stood outside the door. Merrill placed him at once as belonging to the intelligence department.

"Your pardon, sir," the fellow said, studying the girl boldly, "but I am doing only my duty. I am looking for a spy who came into this house, and I am compelled to search every room."

"Very well," snapped Merrill; "search if you will. There is no one here excepting my wife and myself. Be quick! You can see for yourself that this is no place for you."

"Yes, yes," the fellow said with a suavity that was almost a sneer, "it is a much-to-be-regretted intrusion. As you say, your wife is rightly disturbed. How long have you been here, if you please?"

"Perhaps a couple of hours ago."

"From where, if you please?"

"From Berlin. I came in company with Doctor Grieffenhausen and Colonel von Schilling." The man was plainly impressed. Merrill went on haughtily: "It seems you are bent on an inquisition, so I must insist that you retire while my wife finishes her toilet; then you may ask all the questions you wish."

The man was disturbed, but puzzled. He hesitated uneasily, studied the girl searchingly; then shrugged his shoulders. "I much regret the inconvenience I put you to, but I cannot leave the room until I have finished. I will stand at the window and look out while madame makes her toilet. Corporal, shut the door and keep good guard. Let no one go down. Call down to Herr Fink that no one must go out."

"It is an outrage," Merrill said in his best German manner, "but I will submit because you have the force to compel. Later we shall see. Mollie, dear," he

said in English, "you will have to dress with this fellow in the room."

He exchanged glances with the girl as the door was shut and the man went to the window and stood there looking out. He patted her shoulder with a manner of reassurance that belied his real feeling of being at an impasse.

He had felt her tremble as she rested in his arms, but now she made a supreme effort and regained that self-control which seemed to him so marvelous in one so young. "It is outrageous," she said, going toward the bureau, "that two Americans must submit to such insolence. I thought you had some influence with these Germans."

"So I have, dearest," he answered soothingly, sure that the agent at the window understood English. "Don't be annoyed. These are war times. Really you should not have left Holland."

"But I was so anxious to see you, Den, darling," she said; "and I never dreamed of anything like this."

"It is very stupid and disagreeable, dear, but I shall see Von Schilling about it, and this fellow will be properly punished. Von Schilling doesn't go to headquarters for two days, he told me."

"But in the meantime I am compelled to dress with a strange man in my room," she scolded.

She worked rapidly as she talked, simulating a charming petulance, and Merrill watched her with amazed interest. She put up her hair in a coiffure so different from what it had been that her appearance was materially altered. Then swiftly and with furtive glances toward the man at the window, she touched her eyes and the corners of her mouth with a black pencil, and applied an imperceptible but effective nuance of rouge high up on her cheeks. The result was to make her look five years older, while the make-up was so subtle as to challenge no doubt.

Merrill was astounded, but he was rejoiced to find her so resourceful. He felt very little confidence in his own ability to find a way out. He was pinning his faith to Grieffenhausen and Von Schilling, but he was desperately conscious all the while that he would be mercilessly punished with her if it were brought home to her that she was a spy. And the punishment would be to stand in front of a firing squad of soldiers, who would look at him and the beautiful girl with dull, indifferent eyes, set in impassive, brutish faces. Then he shuddered as he thought of the worst things that might and probably would happen to the girl.

Luckily he was in the habit of being cool in critical moments, so he betrayed none of his uneasiness even to the girl, but responded to her petulant complaints with soothing words, puffing slowly at his cigar all the while, and when he saw she was ready for her skirt and waist he got up and handed them to her.

He gave a quick nod of silent approval when she was finally dressed, satisfied that she had done all that was humanly possible to make herself as unlike as might be to the girl who threw herself on his mercy in the entrance court.

"Well," he said curtly in German, "we are ready. Get your work done and get out. Will you sit down here, Mollie, dear?" he added in English.

CHAPTER II.

THE man turned at once. The girl, instead of sitting down, went so close to Merrill that he instinctively put his arm about her.

The agent's manner was so apologetic that it seemed probable that their acting had impressed him. "I must ask your pardon for the inconvenience I am causing you," he said, "but a spy—a woman—came into this hotel, and it is my duty to examine everybody. There were no women in the other rooms; there is one here."

"Where else would my wife be?"

"I am sorry. Did you say she came with you from Berlin?"

"I did not say so. I came from Berlin. I arrived here perhaps two hours ago. My wife came from Holland to meet me here. We have been separated for more than two years."

"Pardon me! It is not that I doubt, but it is my duty; you have your passports in order?"

"Here is mine; I was just about to go out to have it viséed." He took his passport from his pocket and handed it to the man.

The passport was in order, showing where it had been examined at the frontier and later at the station in Brussels. Attached to it were two slips of paper, one with the signature and seal of the chancellor, the other with the signature and seal of the minister for war; and both enjoined the utmost courtesy and attention for Doctor Merrill. The agent bowed stiffly in great humility as he read.

"It is much to be regretted that I have disturbed you, Herr Doktor. I have made a mistake for which I am sorry. I trust you will understand my position and forgive. A spy who has obtained most important papers was traced here from— But that doesn't matter. We had her description and saw her by chance on the street. We pursued her and she came here; she could have gone nowhere else. It was my duty to search the house carefully. You will understand and forgive; yes?"

"So!" Merrill answered coldly, knowing the German type too well to seem to relent in the least. "Well, you have done your duty, go, then!"

The man bowed in stiff acceptance of his dismissal and went toward the door. A tremor shook the girl, and she suddenly relaxed, but as the agent reached the door and opened it he turned. The girl was on guard instantly again. "Pardon," he said deprecatingly, "but I forgot to look at madame's passport."

During the conversation the girl had not spoken, but had looked from one to the other as if wondering what they talked about.

"He wants to see your passport, dear," Merrill said in English in a perfectly matter-of-fact tone. "Get it, please."

"But I destroyed it, dearest," she answered, opening her eyes wide.

"Oh!" he cried as if in dismay. "You shouldn't have done that."

"But it was no longer of any use, Den, dear; I had reached you."

"You shouldn't have done it, Mollie, darling; it may cause trouble."

"I'm sorry, dear," she answered coaxingly. "Let's go to the legation and get another."

The agent waited with a stolid face, but it was plain enough that he had understood, for he swung the door wide open and stood there, his eyes on her face.

"My wife foolishly destroyed her passport," Merrill said in German. "She thought it wasn't needed any longer."

"Yes," the man said slowly, a sinister expression deepening in his little eyes, "it was very foolish." He turned to the corporal outside the door. "Send the *patronne* here! Quickly!" he turned again to Merrill. "A mere form, Herr Doktor, but necessary."

Unconsciously Merrill tightened his arm about the girl. It looked as if the end had come, and he could think of nothing to do. The soldiers were armed, the agent probably was; and he had nothing. There was not the remotest chance that the *patronne* would not betray the fact that he had come there alone and that the girl had only just arrived. And the agent was too clever not to bring out the fact that he had not told the *patronne* that he was expecting his wife.

"What is the matter now?" the girl asked petulantly. "I wish I understood your old German."

"I suppose you know your own business," Merrill said angrily to the agent, "but you are wasting my time with your nonsense." To the girl he explained: "He has sent for the *patronne* for some reason. It is ridiculous, and I shall report him."

"How tiresome!" she pouted; "and I haven't seen you for two years and a half. I suppose it might be interesting enough if I understood. What is it all about, anyhow?"

"He is looking for a spy."

"And he takes you for a spy, dearest? Oh, how funny!" And she broke into a peal of laughter as she looked merrily into his face. "Oh, what a good story to tell when we get home!" She patted his face in a teasing way and leaned closer to him as she laughed.

It was done so naturally that the agent was manifestly shaken, but he set his lips in a hard line and jerked his head as if he would say that he had a duty to perform and that he meant to perform it.

The *patronne* was brought into the room, pushed roughly by the soldier, and left standing between the agent and the other two. She was so frightened and meek that Merrill prepared himself for the worst. The agent addressed her at once in a loud, domineering tone.

"When did this lady come here?" he demanded in French.

The frightened little woman's eyes widened as she stared appealingly at Merrill and then turned her eyes in terror on the agent. She gripped one hand with the other and began to stammer incoherently. Merrill's heart gave a bound; the *patronne* was unwilling to betray the girl. He turned on the agent in a rage.

"Can't you see you frighten her?" he thundered in German; then addressed the *patronne* in French, saying gently: "He wants to know at what time my wife came here from Holland."

"Stop that!" the agent roared angrily. "You shall not prompt her, I don't care who you are."

And Merrill as angrily responded, but in French

instead of German: "Prompt her! You are a fool! How do I prompt her?"

"You tell her this is your wife and that she came from Holland. I will not have it." In his anger he, too, spoke in French.

"How could she help knowing it when my wife came here from the station and engaged this room for us."

"If you do not stop I will interrogate madame separately."

"What is the matter with the man?" the girl suddenly demanded with great indignation. "Is he trying to insult me? Does he think I would be here if I were not your wife? What does he mean?"

"Ah!" snapped the agent in French. "Madame understands French."

"*Ma-is ou-i*," she answered with an air of pride in her accomplishment, drawing her words as Americans do, "*je-le-comprends-assez-bien-ma-is-je-ne-le-parle-que-mal*. Was that right, darling?" she asked Merrill.

He smiled in spite of the seriousness of the occasion. "Your French is very good, dear," he answered.

The agent sneered. "Any one can see that madame is very clever. Also Monsieur le Chirurgien is clever, but I am on the business of the German army and even the All Highest could not save you if you harbored a spy. I warn you."

"Do you mean to suggest that my wife is a spy? You are a fool. Go on and ask your questions and get out. And I warn you that we are Americans and cannot be bullied."

The agent scowled and turned to address the *patronne*. He was interrupted by the entrance of a man of his own type, who said in German: "I have been through the house. Most of the rooms are unoccupied, and there is no sign of a woman."

"Remain here!" was the curt response, and then he turned to the *patronne*: "When did this—this lady come here? Be sure you tell the truth, pig of a Belgoise, or you know what will happen to you. When did she come?"

"But—but this morning, monsieur. She—she came, she said, from Antwerp to meet her—her husband, Monsieur le Docteur Merrill. I know Monsieur le Docteur a long time; he has stayed here before. She engaged this room. That is all I know."

"Is that her trunk?" He pointed to Merrill's trunk.

The *patronne* gulped in fright. "But, no, monsieur; that came with Monsieur le Docteur. She—she brought nothing but—but a bag." She looked appealingly at Merrill.

"I thought your American women carried many trunks," the agent said to Merrill.

"American women are not fools," Merrill snapped. "My wife would know enough not to bring a lot of trunks into Belgium just now."

"I would suppose she might have known enough not to come here at all. It would have been wiser."

"Den," broke in the girl, "I can't think of the right words in French; you tell him I left my trunk in Rotterdam because I was going straight back with you. I wish I hadn't come here at all; but I was so anxious

to see you, dear." She whimpered a little as if beginning to be frightened.

"You hear what she says," Merrill growled savagely; "you understand English. Her trunks are in Rotterdam. Naturally she wouldn't bring them here."

"Which is her bag?"

Merrill pointed to the bag she had carried. "That one."

"It must be examined. Arnold, look through it!"

His fellow agent started toward the bag. Merrill made a hasty movement, but subsided when a pressure on his arm indicated that the girl was content to have it examined.

The man went to the bag, opened it, and tossed out a few pieces of underclothing, handkerchiefs, and a few trifles. Then he examined the bag carefully for secret hiding places. "This is all," he said.

The other man, an evil sneer on his face, went over and shook out some of the pieces and looked them over carefully. "It is not marked," he said to Merrill; "nothing is marked. Nothing is very fine. American women are supposed to be very particular."

"You hound!" cried Merrill. "How dare you?"

"Madame must be searched," the agent said with a greater assurance than at any time before.

"What!" roared Merrill, though his heart sank; but again there came the reassuring pressure on his arm.

"A formality," the man said with an evil smile. "If madame had not been so injudicious as to destroy her passport, there would have been no necessity; as it is, it must be done."

"It is abominable, outrageous," Merrill cried. "Search my wife! And who will dare to do this?"

"Oh," the agent answered with a leering suavity that made Merrill ache to knock him down, "let the Herr Doktor reassure himself; we have a woman at headquarters whose business it is to conduct such matters. If madame will be so good as to put her hat on we will go at once."

"At headquarters!" raged Merrill, though his heart was very heavy. "Good! Perhaps General von Schilling will be there. We shall see if such an indignity can be put upon my wife with impunity. Did you understand, my dear?" he asked the girl.

"You all talk so fast," she answered petulantly, "that I can understand nothing. There was something about my bag, and I saw them shamelessly throw everything out of it. Did they think their spy was hidden in it? What is it all about?"

"Now, be calm, my dear," he answered soothingly. "It seems they were expecting to find something in your bag that should not be there—"

"Smuggling?" she demanded scornfully. "Well, I didn't think of such a thing."

"No, it isn't that. I think, dear—now don't be angry—I think they are crazy enough to suspect you are a spy."

"What fools these Germans are!"

"This one is a fool, anyhow; but he has these soldiers and we must do what he demands."

"And what does he demand, Den? Why don't you give him what he wants and get rid of him?"

"He wants—now be calm, dearest—"

"Den," she cried, "you make me so nervous I'll scream the first thing you know. Tell me what it is."

"You must be searched, madame," the agent said in disgust at Merrill's hesitation.

She stared at him for a moment as if she did not comprehend, although he had spoken in English; then she gasped: "Searched? Me? And do you mean to say," she demanded, moving indignantly away from her supposititious husband, "do you mean to say, Hayden Merrill, that you would let that man touch me?" She looked at the agent with an expression of fury. "If he so much as lays a finger on me—"

Merrill drew her to him again. "No, Mollie, darling! There is no intention of such a thing. You will have to go to headquarters, where there is a woman who will search you."

"I don't like that either."

"But you must submit, dear. Put on your hat, please."

"And where will you be all this time?" she demanded, as if yielding, but just about ready to cry.

"I'll go with you, of course."

The agent stood watching and listening, his lip curling with disgust of the way American men treated their wives. At the same time doubt began to assail him once more. Until the matter of the passport had come up he had accepted their story. But the destruction of the passport had been too absurd to believe, and then the contents of the bag, he had been sure, were not such as an American woman of friends would have had. And yet this American had friends of great power and influence; and the two certainly acted naturally enough. He was doubtful, but still suspicious. He would be polite, but he would let them decide at headquarters. It was better to be over-careful than not careful enough.

"Send for a taxi!" Merrill said peremptorily.

The agent smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "There is no such thing as a taxi to be had in Brussels. It is but a short distance; we can walk."

"With this guard of soldiers, as if we had been arrested? I will not do it. You can go too far, you with your ridiculous charges."

"It will not be necessary, Herr Doktor," the agent growled, furious but uncertain; "you and your wife shall walk alone. I will go ahead, and two of the soldiers shall follow at a respectful distance. Then if there is no attempt at escape—"

"Escape, you ass! From what would we try to escape? I think it would be lucky for you if we did run away."

"I am only doing my duty," was the sullen response to this, and then the agent turned on the *patronne*, who had stood trembling with terror all the while. "As for you, pig of a Belgoise, it will be a bad day for you if you have deceived me. Arnold, leave a guard here to watch this woman. Search the house again; search everywhere. If you are ready, Herr Doktor?"

"Are you ready, Mollie, darling?" Merrill asked.

"If I must go I suppose I'm ready," she whimpered, "but what will papa say when he hears I've been arrested for smuggling? Innocent, too. I was so particular when I left Holland—"

"Ach!" snorted the agent. "This is no question of smuggling."

He led the way downstairs, followed by Merrill and the girl, with two soldiers bringing up the rear.

CHAPTER III.

MERRILL had devoted himself to his profession with so single a mind since his very boyhood that it may be said he had had no time to know himself. Now he was making disturbing discoveries. For one thing he had found out that he was as capable of romantic rashness as any one else; for another that he had some histrionic powers; also that to simulate an emotion was very likely to start the emotion pretended into a genuine feeling.

Here he was tangled up in a perilous adventure merely because a distressed damsel had appealed to him; he had turned actor in her behalf, and he had simulated affection for her. And it was that latter performance which disturbed him most. Certainly toward the last it had been easy to pretend. He admitted frankly to himself that he admired her courage, her beauty, and her cleverness, and he was perfectly conscious that there was a great deal of tenderness mixed with his admiration.

At first, as they left the house, neither spoke, but they exchanged glances, deprecating on her part, reassuring on his, but as they turned into the Rue des Armuriers the agent was far enough ahead to be out of easy hearing, so that when he looked down at her and she looked up at him she murmured: "I am so sorry."

"Oh," he answered, "I think we are doing very well. That fellow is puzzled, though I thought at one time he was more than suspicious."

"I think," she said, "you are the bravest and the noblest man I ever heard of. If any harm should come to you through me I should never forgive my self."

Merrill wondered how he could smile at such a time, but he found he was doing so as he looked down into her upturned face. "Don't worry about that," he said. "As for courage, I never saw your equal. How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

"A girl of your age doing this! It is terrible."

"It is for France," she answered.

"It is wonderful just the same. And you acted so naturally. Some of the time I actually thought you were my wife."

She flashed a glance up at him, and then looked hastily down. There was something in her expression that made him catch his breath. "Have you any suggestions to make now?" he asked to overcome an embarrassment that seemed to have caught both of them.

"I can think of nothing; we must trust to chance now. They will find nothing on me; perhaps we shall escape, though I am afraid. Oh, I am so afraid for you!"

"And for yourself?"

"I knew what I was risking, but it was for my country. I should not have dragged you into it; you are an American. There is one thing in our favor," she went on, changing the subject as if it

hurt her too much to go on with it; "they have only my description. They do not know me, and a description describes so many. My clothes are different from any I have been seen in. If only they do not search under the mattress, where I hid part of my clothing."

She was clinging to his arm in a most wifely manner as they walked along, and the thought shot athwart the talk and settled in his consciousness that it was very pleasant to feel her hand on his arm and the soft pressure of her round shoulder against him.

"We must get out of this," he said suddenly; "I would like to know you under less poignant conditions. You don't want me to know your name? I mean your full name."

"There is no reason why you shouldn't. I'd like you to know it. My name is Rose d'Almeyrac. I am of Strasbourg; an Alsatian. My grandfather was from the south of France; that is why my name is French." She straightened and flashed a look of pride at him. "And that is why, perhaps, they could never Germanize me."

He pressed her arm to his side in token of his understanding. "I am glad you told me," he said; then, as they turned into the broad Rue de la Madeleine: "He is taking us to the Grand' Place. Is it there that the headquarters are?"

"I do not know." He felt her shudder slightly.

"Keep up your courage, Mollie, dear," he said with a smile. "You have been my brave little wife so far; keep it up a while longer."

She looked up at him with an answering smile, and then, with a sudden assumption of her American-girl manner, said: "I should worry, Den, darling; I'll come through with bells on."

The slang was so unexpected that Merrill stared for a moment, then broke into a laugh so hearty and unaffected that the agent in front of them turned with a frown and stared at them.

"Now where did you get hold of that?" Merrill demanded.

She laughed. "I went to school in London and knew an American girl there. She taught me some of your slang. I never could make it fit in exactly. Was it very bad? I'm trying to imitate her all the time. She was so funny! Ugh!" She crowded close to him. "Look at those brutes in the automobile!"

They were near to where the Rue de la Madeleine broadens into the Marché-aux-Herbes. The automobile in question had dashed recklessly through that crowded thoroughfare.

The driver, who was in uniform, never turned his head, and the two men in the tonneau only looked at each other and smiled. Both of the men were officers.

"Beast!" muttered Merrill, and stared at them fiercely, and then, as the big, powerful touring car came near, he jumped from the sidewalk, waving his arms and shouting.

Rose stood on the sidewalk, white and trembling; the agent came back on a swift run, his face distorted with anger and fear, for he saw himself disgraced by the conduct of the American. The car stopped suddenly at the word of command from one of the officers in the tonneau, and the older of the

two stood up with both hands outstretched, crying out in German: "My friend! The very man I was looking for. I was in despair."

"I, too, was looking for you," said Merrill.

The agent gaped, and an expression of chagrin crept over his face. Rose d'Almeyrac composed herself at once and waited.

"Grieffenhausen and I were just starting on a search for you," said Von Schilling. "Get in quickly." He opened the door of the tonneau.

"One moment, colonel, please."

"Pardon me! General," interposed Grieffenhausen proudly.

"Ah, I see your insignia! Congratulations, general!"

Von Schilling bowed stiffly. "I knew nothing of it until I arrived here. But get in, my friend; our business is urgent."

"First let me present you to my wife. Mollie, darling!" he said in English, and as she went toward him he added in German to them: "She speaks only English, so I hope you will excuse me if I speak in that language; I know both of you understand it. Mollie, darling, my good friends, General von Schilling and Doctor Grieffenhausen, the greatest surgeon in Germany, which says, the world."

"You do me too much honor," protested the surgeon complacently.

"Madame, your servant," said Von Schilling, bowing ceremoniously with an air of gallantry, his eyes fixed in bold admiration on her beautiful face. "You will honor us also."

"It seems we may not," said Merrill, turning coldly to look at the agent. "We are under arrest."

"What?" demanded Von Schilling, glancing superciliously at the uneasy agent. "What has my friend done, then?"

Merrill took the word from the agent. "My worst crime, I believe, is that I am the husband of my wife. She is accused, for stupid reasons of his own, of being a spy. That is what you said, is it not?" He glared fiercely at the agent.

"She has no passport, excellency," the agent said, standing rigid before the magnificent officer.

Merrill waved his hand wearily. "She is not used to traveling, and had no idea of the importance of her passport. She was waiting in Holland for me and saw a chance to come over here to meet me, knowing the hotel I would stop at. She meant to surprise me. She thought her passport was of no more use. There is the story, and on that this fellow invades our room while my wife is making her toilet and arrests her."

"Pig dog! Ass! Fool!" vociferated General von Schilling. "Germany is finely served by such as you. Be gone! My friends, get in!"

"Excellency!" pleaded the agent with abject humility and yet with a dogged persistence. "There are circumstances—"

"Will you bandy words with me?" roared the angry junker.

"Pardon me, general!" interposed Merrill. "Perhaps the fellow is only obeying orders. He annoyed me by the way he conducted himself. I know you have to be very careful these days, and I would not wish to seem to be avoiding any proper interrogation. He

wishes that my wife should be searched, and we do not object so long as it is done decently and with due respect. Perhaps it would be better to take us to headquarters and end the matter."

The latter part of the conversation had been in German, and Rose d'Almeyrac, who had stood with one foot on the running board, looking from one to the other with a puzzled expression, now spoke. "What is the matter now, Den, dear?" she asked.

"I am telling General von Schilling that we have no wish to avoid any formalities, but that we only objected to this fellow's manner."

She laughed gayly. "Oh, as for that let them go the limit. This man with his soldiers and his roughness frightened me, but now that I have General von Schilling to protect me it is only a good joke. It is an adventure." She glanced at the magnificent officer with such frank admiration that he flushed and straightened with pride.

"But it is preposterous," cried Grieffenhausen. "How can she be a spy? Besides, my dear general, there is no time to waste on such foolishness; every moment is valuable."

"You are right," agreed the general. "Begone, you dog! I will be myself responsible for my friends. I will see the governor general personally and explain. Get in, my friends."

It seemed to fall out naturally that Rose sat between the two Germans while Merrill sat on one of the occasional seats opposite Grieffenhausen.

"To the governor general!" commanded Von Schilling to the chauffeur.

The automobile swung around and went back the way it had come, and from where he sat Merrill saw the agent looking after them, his face distorted with rage. And Merrill felt then that the man had not altered his conviction that Rose was a spy, and that it was not his intention to leave the trail.

He could not tell whether or not Rose had seen the man's face, but she would know that they were not yet out of danger. He looked at her, but she did not return his glance, her whole attention being centered on the officer by her side, her whole attitude one of delight and admiration. And Von Schilling was responding in kind.

"Ah, sly one! Sly one!" Grieffenhausen said to him with ponderous jocosity. "You would not tell us why you were in such a hurry to get away from us. And now I understand why you were such a good boy in Berlin. But I do not blame you; she is very beautiful."

Merrill smiled. "Naturally I was eager to see her."

"Yes, of course. You are forgiven. But, my friend," he went on with a suddenly serious air, "there is a great honor awaiting you; you are to perform an operation on a high-placed one. No, say nothing until you have heard; everything must give way for this." He lowered his voice. "It is the all highest himself."

Merrill almost cried out his dismay, but had presence of mind to restrain himself. He knew that this was a thing he dared not refuse.

"We return to Berlin?" he asked, and he knew his tone must betray the shock he felt. It did, but Grieffenhausen misinterpreted it as any German would. It

was a terrible thing that the all highest was in need of a surgeon's care.

"Do not be alarmed," he said; "it is not so serious. It is his throat, but your skill will make it right. Do not lose your nerve because your patient is so high-placed. I am depending on you. He is in Bruges; but that must not be whispered to any one, and not a word about his illness. You understand that?"

"Yes, I understand." He thought quickly. There was no possible way of avoiding the task set him. He looked at Rose to see if she had by any chance overheard. Evidently she was giving her whole mind to winning the good will of Von Schilling. "But my wife?" he said.

"We will see that she is well taken care of here until your return. It will not be for long. My dear general," he spoke in English for the benefit of Rose, "I have explained everything to Doctor Merrill. He is concerned about leaving his wife."

"Leave me?" she cried. "No, not again, I assure you."

"I must go to Bruges to perform an operation Mollie, dear," explained Merrill, at his wits' end and seeing no better way than to leave it to her to decide.

"No doubt the governor general's lady would take care of her under the circumstances," Grieffenhausen went on over her head.

"Yes, of course," responded the general. "I will speak of it when I see his excellency. That can be arranged."

"General," said Rose, looking up into his face and pouting adorably, "I have not seen my husband for two and a half years, I have never seen Bruges." She shook her finger at him with mock seriousness. "I am going to put my fate in your hands, and I shall think I have made a mistake in liking you so much if you do not take me to Bruges with you. General, look me in the eyes and say no if you dare."

She was so charmingly vivacious, and she challenged him with such an expression in her great gray eyes that the impressionable officer brushed the upturned ends of his mustache with his forefinger and smiled at her. "It can be arranged, madame; it can be arranged, Grieffenhausen. If it will please the Herr Doktor, madame can go with us. Why not? Here is the car; there is room; we can find a suitable place for her in Bruges while the Herr Doktor is occupied."

"Oh, you dear thing!" cried Rose ecstatically, again turning the battery of her eyes on him. "Now don't frown, Doctor Grieffenhausen; I shan't be any trouble at all, really. Smile at me!"

The pompous surgeon not only smiled—he laughed aloud. "Ah, my dear colleague!" he exclaimed. "The wonder to me now is not that you hurried to see her, but that you ever left her."

Von Schilling had no difficulty in satisfactorily explaining the situation to the governor general, partly because he was General von Schilling and partly because of the need of the all highest for the services of the American surgeon.

"This American is highly honored," the governor general said. "Is there no German surgeon who can perform this operation?"

"Grieffenhausen will be there, but he says this Merrill is a genius in this class of operations."

"Griffenhausen should know. You say this American has been in Vienna and Berlin these two years and a half. Is he for the fatherland? He believes in our kultur?"

"Enthusiastic. He will be of great service to us among those pigs of Americans when he is home."

"I will give you a safe-conduct for him and his wife while he is in Belgium. The secret service is independent of us of the army, and I do not like interfering, but in this case it shall be done."

Von Schilling came out of the palace after his interview with an increase of complacency and pomposity. "It is all right, my friends," he said; "here is a safe-conduct for you from his excellency. Now we may go at once."

"Good!" cried Griffenhausen, beaming on Merrill and Rose as if to call upon them to witness the power and influence of Von Schilling. "Now we go to Doctor Merrill's hotel to get his instruments. Then away to Bruges at once."

There was no opportunity then, and there had been none for Merrill to obtain from Rose her views or wishes; he had simply gone on making arrangements for the trip to Bruges, leaving it to her to make objections if she had any to make. As they sped back to the little hotel, scattering pedestrians before them with ruthless carelessness, but luckily injuring no one, he could hear Rose talking to the magnificent and pleased Von Schilling in her imitation of her American girl friend, and he wondered at her cleverness and at her courage.

When they reached the hotel they found that the soldiers were no longer on guard at the entrance, and when they went quickly up the stairs they saw no one. Merrill drew a favorable augury from this. "Good!" he cried softly as they entered the room. "There is no one here."

But Rose ran at once to the bed, as soon as she had closed and locked the door, and felt under the mattress. Then she lifted it and examined under it. "They have found my clothes," she gasped.

"You think——" He stared at her.

She stood, white and trembling, for a moment, staring back at him; then she walked over to him and put her hand timidly on his arm. "I am so sorry," she said, looking up into his eyes. If he had followed the sudden impulse that seized him he would have caught her to his breast and rained kisses on her quivering lips. Instead, however, he drew a deep breath and looked away until he had himself under control.

"I'm not sorry," he said as he looked down into her face again. "I am glad for all that has happened, no matter what comes. But we are not going to give up until the end. They have found your clothes, and no doubt they think they have you now. But we have a small chance yet, and we'll play the game to a finish. No doubt we can get to Bruges in spite of the secret service, for we go in the automobile. Perhaps from Bruges there will be some way of escape. I admit it doesn't look very hopeful, but one never knows. Don't lose your courage, little girl. You've been wonderful so far. Keep it up. I'll secure my instruments; and we'll get out of here."

"I'm not afraid for myself," she said, taking her hand from his arm.

"Of course," he cried, "I should have known that. I did know it. You are the bravest girl in the world; and the cleverest girl, too, I think. Just set your wits to working and see if you can't think of some way of escaping from Bruges. I'm going to operate on the kaiser. Something the matter with his throat. You think up some plan and count on me."

He had turned to his trunk, and was hunting for the particular case of instruments he needed. He hadn't said what he had meant to say, and what he had said was somewhat incoherent, but with something gripping at his heart it wasn't easy for him to function properly with his brain, though he would have been the first to know positively that the operation of the one organ had nothing directly to do with that of the other.

He threw his case into his bag and threw his toilet articles after it; then he caught up her little bag, into which she had put her own toilet articles. "We must hurry," he said.

"Perhaps I can learn something useful from this Von Schilling," she suggested.

"Yes. The brute!" he answered.

They went downstairs. At the entrance court the *patronne* waited. Merrill thrust a handful of bank notes into her hand, whispering: "We may not be back. Thank you for helping us. Good-by!"

The woman's face was white and drawn, but smiling. "I understood," she murmured. "I hope nothing will happen to you. Adieu!"

They ran out and jumped into the automobile. "To Bruges," Von Schilling ordered, and the car leaped away.

CHAPTER IV.

BOTH Merrill and Rose prayed that the car wouldn't hit and maim any one as it sped ruthlessly through the streets of Brussels regardless of pedestrians, but both were glad to be running away so swiftly from the secret-service agent who, they had no doubt, was already in pursuit of them. Rose chattered gayly and with obvious admiration with Von Schilling. Merrill, glancing her way now and then, wondered how she could play her part so faithfully when he knew that her heart must be in her throat all the time. His own part was easy enough; he had only to talk surgery to Griffenhausen.

He could discuss surgery mechanically, and so he did; for all the time that he talked with Griffenhausen or when he leaned back in his seat silent his brain was busy. He had ceased to marvel at the change he had undergone; he had first recognized it, then accepted it, then dismissed it. He had left Berlin primarily a surgeon; he left Brussels primarily a man and only incidentally a surgeon.

What would they do when they reached Bruges? He could see no way out. Perhaps they would be taken back to Brussels the next day or the day after. Then what? He had the safe-conduct, but what would that avail them if that agent came forward with the clothing found under the mattress? And he would surely be waiting for them. Perhaps he could persuade these men to get them into Holland from Bruges; it was no more than ten miles from the bor-

der, and it should not be difficult to conjure up some excuse for not going back to Brussels.

Perhaps the keen-witted girl who was chatting so gayly with Von Schilling had a workable plan; certainly no one watching her could imagine she was troubled about the future. It seemed ages and ages ago since she had come into his life, and yet it was only a few hours ago. What a wonderful girl she was! So beautiful, so clever, really bewitching!

She had evidently completely won Von Schilling. The German brute devoured her with his eyes, he giggled like a schoolgirl, he swelled his chest, he brushed upward the ends of his mustache with the air of a conqueror. Merrill would have liked to take him by the throat. How could the girl endure him even for policy's sake?

He could occasionally catch bits of their talk. She was asking him wondering questions about the soldiers who marched one way and the other, so worn out and filthy coming from Bruges, so fresh and gay going toward it. Sometimes it was about the marvelous German army that none could withstand. He caught the word *kultur* repeated many times. Again she would say something, and both of them would laugh.

It was dusk when they entered Bruges. There was a slight delay while Von Schilling found quarters for them, but they were of the best when found; the mansion of a merchant prince of the city was placed at their disposal. The lordly Von Schilling proved his devotion by demanding to see the master and mistress in person and by bullying them arrogantly as he bade them give his friends the best they had.

"Pigs of Brugeois!" he said insolently. "You will answer to me if there be any complaint." He turned from the trembling couple to his friends, looking mainly into the beautiful face of the girl. "I am much grieved that I cannot dine with you, but my duty calls me elsewhere. If everything is not as you wish you will inform me."

"But we shall see you again?" cried Rose in a pretty, pleading way.

The general visibly swelled. He brushed up the ends of his mustache and glanced furtively at Merrill, who was talking with Grieffenhausen. "I will surely see you again; how could I help it?"

She looked at him and turned quickly away as if embarrassed. He smiled with the air of a conquering hero and stepped over to the two men. "Are you ready?" he asked Grieffenhausen.

"At your service, Herr General. I will come back for you in about an hour, Herr Doktor. You will be ready? There are ones who must not be kept waiting, you understand."

"I understand. Our bags! Are they here?" He saw the chauffeur with them in the hall. "Ah, yes! Until we meet again then, gentlemen!" He bowed ceremoniously; they both clicked their heels together and bowed stiffly from the waist. Then, with a clumsy imitation of a Frenchman's gallant manner, Von Schilling took Rose's hand and carried it to his lips.

They stood silent until the door had closed behind the Germans; then Merrill turned to the owners of the house, who had drawn back as far as possible. They were a couple well past middle age, evidently

persons of refinement. "Monsieur et madame" he said to them in French in a low tone, "we are most sorry to trouble you. We are not Germans, but Americans compelled to come here with a seeming good grace, and anxious only to get away. I hope you will forgive us."

"Oh, monsieur," the man cried eagerly, "you are Americans? Then the most we can do will be little enough. My wife and I will be only too happy to serve you. We have not much; they do not leave us much—" He stopped as if afraid he had already spoken too freely.

"You can trust us," Rose said quickly. "We like them no better than you, but we have to pretend in order that we may get away from them. We need very little. If you will give us what you can spare of food, it will suffice."

"And I would not wish to hurry you," interposed Merrill, "but you heard that I shall be called for in an hour."

"Yes, yes," cried the man. "Margot, you go attend to the food, while I show them to their room. You will find everything ready for you; we are compelled to be prepared; it is the price we pay for being allowed to live here in our own home. But what can we do? We are helpless. There are your bags. I will carry them."

Merrill gently pushed him away and took up the bags. "You forget we are not German," he said softly.

The bedchamber to which they were conducted was large and furnished in the solid, dignified way of a century ago; the walls were wainscoted in dark oak, heavy draperies hung at the windows and about the massive four-post bedstead, and a great fireplace was at one side.

"I will have a fire for you in a few minutes," the host said. "I think you will find everything you need. There is the bathroom. We have modernized the house in some ways." He was going on nervously when Merrill stopped him.

"Pardon me," he said; "the last thing I wish is to give you trouble, but I am quite sure we shall have to entertain our German"—he hesitated a moment, seeking the word—"companions; so if you could possibly let us have an adjoining room for that purpose."

"But, yes, monsieur; it is here just as you would wish, and no trouble at all. See!" He opened a door and turned on the electric lights in a room beyond "It was my father's personal library and writing room. Perhaps monsieur and madame would wish their dinner served up here? It will be no trouble."

"It would please us very much."

A moment later the two stood together in the silent room. Rose had appreciated his delicacy and thoughtfulness in asking for the extra room, but it seemed to her that it was only in keeping with the simple nobility which she had sensed in him from the beginning. He was blaming himself for his lack of wit in being unable to see some way out; she was thinking that she had never met any one who embodied in himself so completely all that a man should be—sinewy strength, good looks, ready wit, utter coolness in the face of danger, a perfect delicacy. She was the first to speak.

"I don't want to keep telling you how sorry I am," she began.

He interrupted, smiling. "That's right," he said. "That's understood. Besides, as I told you, I'm glad for everything excepting that you are in trouble."

"You, too."

"It's a pleasure to share your trouble. No, don't let's talk of that. Have you any ideas? I know you asked Von Schilling a great many questions. Did you learn anything?"

"I learned that it is useless to try to get through to Holland. It is only a little over ten miles to the north, but it is carefully guarded with soldiers every few feet, lots of barbed wire, and charged electric wires."

"And toward the coast, Zebrugge way?"

"Worse yet. The only chance is toward Dixmude, more than twenty miles, and there—if we could ever get so far—are the lines of trenches. Between here and there streams of one sort and another, large and small canals, with every bridge well guarded."

"And back there in Brussels is that agent waiting for us," said Merrill with a frown. "I'm sorry I'm so worthless in such an emergency. I can't think of a thing. Perhaps we'll have to go back to Brussels and take our chance there. We might face the fellow down again. I ought to have some standing after operating on their all highest. What do you think?"

A pitiful little smile curved her lips. "I'm afraid there isn't much chance for us."

"Of course there's a chance," he cried quickly. "Because we can't see our way doesn't mean there isn't a way. I'm not used to this sort of thing, you see; another time I'll be more efficient."

She smiled and put her little hand on his arm. "I hope there will be no other time for you, and I think you very efficient."

The light touch of her hand sent a quivering shock through him. He wanted to lay his hand on hers—it looked so white and soft, as if it would be a real adventure to touch it. "Well," he said, "we'll give them a run for their money, anyhow."

"I remember hearing Becky Thompson say that," she laughed. "I can understand now what it means better than I did then."

He laughed, too, realizing that he was very easily dropping into the slang he had always carefully avoided. He wondered if that was one of the results of his sudden awakening.

"It seems there's nothing to do but wait, then," he said. "When the time comes we'll be ready for it. It'll be strange if French wit and Yankee wit together can't beat their heavy German wits."

"Ah!" she sighed. "But there are so many of them between us and safety, and I must not conceal from you that theirs is the most wonderfully organized secret service in the world. I would not be surprised if already we were being watched. But we mustn't talk now; dinner will be served in a little while, and then you will have to go to your operation."

"Yes, and while we eat we will become acquainted."

"But I feel already as if I had known you forever," she cried.

"Yes," he agreed, "that is the way I feel about you; but mostly it has been the tragedy of life that

we have shared together. From now on till they come for me, let it be comedy."

"*Zu befehl, excellenz!*" she laughed, stiffly saluting like a German soldier. "I go to make my prettiest toilet."

CHAPTER V.

NEVER before had the serious young surgeon let himself go with so much abandon; never before had he desired to do so as at that tête-à-tête dinner with Rose d'Almeyrac.

That young lady had returned from making her "prettiest toilet" wearing the same frock, since it was the only one she had with her, but yet somehow a different girl from the one with whom he had left Brussels. The pencil touches on her fair face had been washed away, and her hair was done differently; nothing more.

"Voilà!" she had cried gayly on her return. "*La vraie Mademoiselle d'Ameyrac.*" With that she had made an old-fashioned curtsy.

Merrill could do nothing but stare at her for a moment. She had seemed sufficiently adorable before, but now, looking only her eighteen years, smiling, dimpled, flushed with the excitement of the game she was utterly adorable and desirable. She had put tragedy behind her, and stood there before him the incarnation of joyous, light-hearted youth.

Merrill understood intuitively that she was not playing a part now, but that she wished him to know her for a brief while as she really was, as if there might never again be an opportunity. He entered into the spirit of it with all his heart. He had no change to make in his appearance, but he washed away the signs of travel, the dust and grime of the road, and sat opposite to her at the little table and released all the gaiety of his nature.

It was as if they had said to themselves and to each other, let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Merrill was to face death many times before the war ended in the utter defeat of the German hordes, who at that time seemed invincible in their might and numbers, but at no time did it seem so close, so threatening, and yet never had life seemed so full of joy and promise.

They laughed and talked as they ate, revealing themselves frankly to each other with a fullness that would have been impossible with a year of conventional acquaintance. Merrill, listening to her sweet voice, watching the dimples play about the corners of her red-lipped mouth, seeing her gray eyes luminous with feeling or dancing with merriment, reaffirmed to himself the belief that she was the most winsome, the most adorable creature he had ever met.

Altogether it was an hour that Merrill looked back to with sighing wonder many times. He did not believe he had ever laughed so much in the course of his life or had ever been so frivolous or so happy. At her imitations of Von Schilling and Grieffenhausen, which were to the life, he threw himself back in his chair with mirth.

"Where did you learn to do it?" he asked.

"I hardly had to learn; it is natural, I think. My mother was an actress; a very good one."

"Ah!" he cried. "That, then, accounts for the clever way you have played your part to-day."

"You have done well, too," she said warmly; "you have not failed once—not once."

He looked at her with a suddenly serious air. "I have not had to act all the time," he said.

She understood, for she flushed, drew a deep breath, and looked down at her plate; then suddenly broke into an imitation of the agent in Brussels, catching his gruff gutturals wonderfully.

Merrill laughed. "At a pinch," he said, "you could pass for a German boy."

"If I had the clothes, yes. I had thought of that; there are soldiers no bigger than I. There is Von Schilling's chauffeur, for example. *Zu befehl, excellenz!*" she imitated to the life.

"It is an idea," he said eagerly. "At least we can think of it. But here comes Grieffenhausen; I know that heavy step of his. You won't go out on any account while I am gone; promise me. We are comrades together in this. Besides you couldn't help me by leaving me. As your husband, you know, I am by now as guilty as you."

"I know that," she said quickly as there came a knock at their door. "I will remain here until you return. You will hurry?"

"Yes. Come in!"

It was Grieffenhausen, and a few minutes later Merrill was on his way to operate on the all highest.

It was an operation which Merrill always looked back at with the least pleasure of any he had felt in relieving any other patient. The exalted one, to begin with, was more cowardly about it than he had ever seen any one, although he tried to cover it up by mouthing fine phrases about his people and the necessity of being careful for their sakes.

It was not a difficult operation, although the throat of the all highest was in a bad state, and Merrill found himself wondering grimly if it were not the result of all the foolish, mad, hypocritical words that had been formed there. However, he acquitted himself to the admiration of Grieffenhausen, and pronounced his patient in a fair way to quick recovery. For recompense he had conferred upon him the order of *Pour le Merite*, which the sublime egotist had had prepared for the occasion, and which Grieffenhausen evidently regarded as an extraordinary reward.

"It is wonderful," whispered Grieffenhausen as they left the room. "It has never been conferred on a surgeon before. You have been most highly honored, my dear confrère. Is it any wonder that his people almost worship him?"

Merrill would have liked to throw the thing into the nearest gutter to show his disdain of it, but had self-control enough to put off that disposition of it until he should reach neutral soil, if ever he should compass that desirable end. That thought brought him back with a jerk to the perilous situation he and Rose d'Almeyrac were in. He was free now for the night, and if only he could think of some plan! He cursed his dull wits for their lack of response to his appeal to them, and he wanted to curse Grieffenhausen for his unctuous twaddle about the all highest, which he kept up till the house was reached.

A big touring car drew up at the gates of the mansion as they arrived, and Von Schilling alighted. He hastened to their car, and questioned them eagerly

about their exalted patient. Merrill invited the surgeon to go in with them, but he refused in order to return to the patient, with whom he must remain during the night.

He could not refrain from imparting to Von Schilling, however, the extraordinary news of the order conferred on Merrill. "Fortunate man! Fortunate in all things!" cried Von Schilling in his pompous way. "Now you will have something to show in evidence of the goodness of the all highest. Your countrymen must now hold you in high honor."

"They will know how to value it, as I do," Merrill answered dryly. He had come to have a singular loathing for these people.

When Grieffenhausen left them, Von Schilling took Merrill by the arm and said: "Come inside; I have something to tell you."

There was something in his tone that made Merrill cast a swift, suspicious glance at him. In the darkness he could see nothing that told him anything, however, so he agreed cordially, and they went into the house together and up to the library.

Rose was there, waiting for Merrill's return. She had resumed her make-up, thinking Grieffenhausen might return with Merrill, and not sure, indeed, that Von Schilling might not take advantage of Merrill's absence to make her a visit.

At sight of Von Schilling now, she sprang from her chair with a joyous air. "What good fortune!" she cried. "I had not hoped to see you again to-night, general. Sit down. Did everything go well, Den, dear?"

Merrill sighed almost audibly, seeing how prettily she played the hostess, patting him affectionately on the shoulder, waiting on Von Schilling, and getting him comfortably installed in the easiest chair, talking gayly all the while.

"Dearest," Merrill said, taking an inordinate pleasure in playing his part of affectionate husband, "the general has something to tell us. What is it, then, excellency?"

"I have come to say good-by for one thing," Von Schilling replied, giving Rose a languishing glance; "I am ordered to Dixmude. I go this evening; as soon, in fact, as I leave you."

"Oh, general!" cried Rose as if in dismay. "And we shall not see you again? Don't say that."

Decidedly, thought the infatuated junker, I have made an impression on this pretty American. He crossed his legs and gave the inevitable upward brush to the ends of his mustache. "I hope to see you in Brussels," he answered her. "I shall not be in Dixmude more than a day or two at most."

"But," said Merrill, "our plan is to leave Brussels immediately on our return, and as there is nothing to keep me here now we shall return to-morrow morning."

"That is one of the things I wanted to talk to you about," returned Von Schilling, uncrossing his legs and sitting up straight. "I am afraid it won't be as easy as that. I'm grieved, but I could do nothing to prevent it."

There was a swift, almost imperceptible exchange of glances between Merrill and Rose, but no other sign

of disturbance. "Prevent what?" demanded Rose, opening her eyes wide in innocent wonderment.

"It is that swine of an agent. He persists in declaring you are a spy. I talked with the governor general over the telephone and told him how absurd it was, but he says the secret-service agent declares he found in your room, hidden under the mattress, the very clothes the spy wore when she left Strasbourg."

Rose's eyes opened wide again; then she broke into a laugh of amusement. "How ridiculous!" Then she grew serious. "But I suppose he must have found them if he says so. I told you, Den, that he must have had some reason for accusing me. I wonder if that spy could have been in the room some time when I was out of it?"

"There will be no trouble in satisfying them in Brussels that you came straight to me from Holland," Merrill said calmly. "If only you hadn't destroyed your passport, dear."

"I didn't know," she pouted. "How should I know, general? I never had a passport before. I thought it was just to get me into Brussels and then was no good. You ought not to scold me, Den, when you haven't seen me for two years and a half."

"Ah!" murmured the general. "I don't see how he can scold you. What I don't understand is how he could stay away from you for so long."

"I'd never do it again if I could help it," Merrill said quickly, looking straight at Rose. "Do I understand from what you say, general, that we are expected to go back to Brussels in the morning?"

"I am sorry to say that swine of an agent will be here in the morning to escort you back. But do not be uneasy; I have explained everything to the commandant, and he will see that you are comfortable. Then I shall be back in Brussels as quickly as possible. I have important orders for the crown prince of Bavaria, who happens to be in Dixmude just now, or I would return with you and spare madame all discomfort."

"Oh, how good of you!" Rose cried.

"It is nothing, nothing," he answered magnificently. "Of course you won't think of going out of the house to-night. You see, there are guards stationed outside to prevent your leaving." He laughed complacently. "We Germans are very thorough."

"Oh," laughed Rose, "you are thorough. Papa says it is no wonder your army is invincible when every smallest detail is looked after. But don't mind about us, general. It would be great fun if only Den would stop scolding."

Merrill laughed as pleasantly as if his thoughts were not racing. "I won't scold any more, dearest. After all, it will mean only a short detention in Brussels."

"And we shall see our good general again, too. You surely will be there before we go?" she asked earnestly.

It had annoyed Merrill to have Rose flirt with Von Schilling, but he saw now that but for the good will of the fatuous junker, which she had so cleverly cultivated, the trap would have been sprung already, and they would have been caught in it without a chance of escape.

Now, however, they had a little time if only they

could think of something, anything, no matter how wild. Even if they could escape from the guarded house, where could they go? How could they get out of the city? And if they won safe from the city, how long would they be free in the soldier-infested country? But if they were taken to Brussels what earthly hope was there for them? They were trapped, absolutely trapped. Then suddenly, as if from nowhere, a plan came to him. It was mad enough; so mad and reckless that he wondered how it could ever have found its way into his well-ordered brain. Only neither his brain nor his life was well-ordered now.

As when operating he made sudden decisions sometimes in an emergency, and carried them through with cold precision, so now he went about this.

"I suppose," he said, breaking in on the talk of the other two, "you will be all night in getting through to Dixmude, general?"

"All night, my dear fellow! It is only about twenty miles."

"But the way will be crowded, and there will be so many to whom you must show your papers."

Von Schilling laughed scornfully. "A general on service shows his papers to few. As for the roads being crowded; not very at this time. Besides they will make way for me. No, I shall be there within the hour after starting."

"Ah, yes! I had forgotten, General von Schilling is well known to everybody, of course. They will see who it is and will pass you right along. I had not thought of that."

"Not so," explained Von Schilling with a superior smile. "I am not known on the west front. I have been with Hindenburg on the east front. If the Prussians were here, perhaps; but these men are Bavarians, and do not know me. But these they know," and he pointed with a proud gesture to his insignia. "And why should I be stopped? Why should I be doubted? Who would be running straight into the thick of the army excepting one who had a right there? A civilian? Yes, that would be different. No, my friend, I shall go through without trouble, I assure you."

"How I would love to go!" Rose cried. She had listened and watched as Merrill talked and Von Schilling answered, trying to make out her companion's purpose in his questions, but without result. Her exclamation had been made only to give him more time if he needed it.

Von Schilling smiled loftily. "And I would love to take you; but, no, not even your loveliness would excuse me."

"You are not smoking, general," cried Merrill as if suddenly discovering the fact. "I have only cigars, but they are good."

"No, a cigarette, if you will permit, madame," and Von Schilling felt for his cigarette case as he bowed to Rose.

Merrill jumped up and procured matches from the table. "Hold the match for him, dearest," he said, handing her a match and the box. "You have no idea, general," he went on, "how much it adds to the flavor of the tobacco when my wife holds the match."

"Oh, of that I need no assurance!" declared Von

Schilling, standing up to be in readiness, a fatuous smile on his face.

Merrill went around behind him, and as Rose struck the match and held it while Von Schilling bent forward to get the flame, Merrill caught up the table cover and deftly whipped it over the head of the German, drawing it tight so that his victim could make no noise. At the same time he thrust out his foot and threw him face down on the floor, falling on him to prevent his rising or even of making any effective struggle.

The outraged Prussian, however, although as large a man as Merrill, hadn't the shadow of a chance in a contest with him, and now, being taken at a disadvantage, he was as helpless as a child. He made a furious effort to throw off his assailant, but, finding himself held in a grip of steel, gave up presently.

Rose, who had been as much surprised by the sudden assault as Von Schilling, stood staring until roused by Merrill's curt command, issued as his orders were in the operating room. Now that he was in action he knew exactly what he wished to do.

"Get something to tie his hands and feet with," he said.

Rose started, glanced around the room for something available, and then ran into the bedroom, to return in a few moments with two stout curtain cords. With these Merrill bound the sputtering junker securely. They could hear his voice audibly through the thick folds of the table cover, but the sound could not have carried beyond the room.

Merrill rose from the prostrate figure, a faint smile on his set face. "It's a mad project," he whispered, "but I knew that if we ever fell into the hands of that agent again it would be the end for us."

"What is your plan?" she asked breathlessly.

"To go in the car to Dixmude and there try to make our way through the lines to the other side."

"I'm afraid I don't understand. How can we do it?"

He smiled, delighted to think he had at last risen to the occasion and was leading the expedition. "You and I would not be able to do so, but Von Schilling and his chauffeur would. I have cast myself for the rôle of General von Schilling, and you for that of the chauffeur. By the way, can you drive a car?"

"Well. But the chauffeur?"

"When I have exchanged clothes with the Herr General I will have the chauffeur up here. What do you think of the plan? I realize we have burned our bridges behind us, but, desperate as it is, it is the best I could think of."

"I think it is wonderful," she replied. "What should I have done without you?"

"Well, at any rate, nobody can answer that," he laughed; "so if I get you through in safety I shall swell around and act as if I had done it all. Watch him for a few moments while I look for something. Be sure he doesn't get his head out of that cloth."

The peril they were in, now that he had a definite plan of action, seemed to exhilarate him, and he went about in high spirits. He hunted through his suit case and brought out a small vial of tablets and a hypodermic syringe. He dissolved three of the small tab-

lets in a little water and drew the latter up into the syringe.

Rose watched him wonderingly as he squatted beside Von Schilling and laid bare one of his forearms. She saw him apply the point of the tiny syringe, saw Von Schilling try to free himself, and heard a muffled cry come from behind the cloth.

"What did you do?" she asked.

"I have constituted myself his family physician and have put him to sleep. Now he will not worry while we are away; at least not for a while." He smiled. "Von Schilling," he went on, raising his voice a little, "I am sorry to treat you in this abrupt way, but it is most important that my wife and I get into Holland as quickly as possible. Your stupid secret service means to make us a lot of trouble for nothing, so I am taking this means of getting away. Please explain to Grieffenhausen— Ah, it is useless to tell him anything more, for he is already, as your American friend would say, dead to the world. Pardon me for a few minutes while I convert myself into a terrifying Prussian general."

He picked up the limp, prostrate figure and carried him into the adjoining room, thus betraying to the admiring girl his great strength, for the Prussian was far from being a lightweight.

Although Merrill was in a humor for grim jesting, and was, in fact, getting a vast amount of unexpected pleasure from the situation, he fully realized the need for celerity. He untied and stripped the now unconscious man—stripped off his outer garments—and exchanged his own for them.

He brushed his hair into a pompadour, and after a fashion contrived to turn up the ends of his mustache. It was not as it should be, but he would have to risk that. He retied Von Schilling, and, as a measure of precaution, stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth. Then he rolled him as far under the bed as he could, murmuring: "It isn't a seemly place for a Prussian general to sleep, but I couldn't put you into the Belgian lady's nice bed."

He walked into the library with the absurd strut of the German army officer, at the same time copying Von Schilling's gesture of brushing upward the ends of his mustache with his right forefinger.

Rose d'Almeyrac laughed merrily, but looked him over and nodded her head in approval. "Just a few touches to make you look stupid and you would be quite German."

"Perhaps you would give me those touches? We mustn't waste time, but if you could help me out a little."

"It would take but a few moments. Come into the other room."

"And," he said as he followed her, "if you can think of any way of making my mustache stay up. Is that beyond your art?"

"Well, it's a bit out of my line," she laughed, "but I think I have something here that will make it stick for a while."

Adding a few touches of make-up to a man's face wouldn't seem at first thought to be a very nerve-racking matter, but evidently it was so in this case; for, although both were very calm at the start, at the end both were trembling and both were flushed.

However, it was a good job when it was done, and Merrill, looking at himself in the mirror, declared at once that he was a marvel of stupidity, complacency, and frightfulness. "Now that I look like this," he said, "I shall be able to play the part. Now I will go get company for his excellency."

He put on the casque Von Schilling had taken off on entering, and if he did not look like its owner, at least he made a good figure of a Prussian general as he stood there aping the military manner.

"What do you mean to do?" Rose asked.

"I shall go down, stand in the darkest part of the court, and order him to come up here. I can bark out a brief order enough like Von Schilling to pass muster with a man unsuspecting of danger."

He didn't feel at all sure of his ability to mimic the voice of Von Schilling, but he pulled up the collar of his cape so as to cover his face as much as possible, and when he stepped out of the house went forward until the light over the door was behind him.

"Here!" he called out in the brutally arrogant tone of the junker.

"Ja, excellenz!" responded the chauffeur, leaping instantly out of the car and hastening toward Merrill.

"Upstairs!" snapped Merrill.

The man turned to look at him as he passed, and Merrill knew the automatic obedience of the soldier well enough to realize that he had dared to look only because he was suspicious of something different in the voice that was giving him orders. And then it occurred to him that the man would never mount the stairs in front of his superior officer without definite orders to that effect, and that he would wait in the hall for those orders.

A swift side glance told him that he was right and that the man stood there, rigid, awaiting his superior. Merrill pretended to be interested in something in the street, and backed into the house, closing the door after him. Then he swung suddenly, and caught the startled man by the throat and squeezed hard, his fingers pressing the right place to produce the quickest effect.

The man tried to cry out and fought like a cat. He was small, but he was wiry, and there was danger that he would make sufficient noise to attract attention. Merrill took one hand from his throat and drew his automatic, which he placed at the man's head.

"I will kill you if you make the least sound," he said softly; but there was a note in his voice that carried conviction, for the man subsided at once. He stared at Merrill in appalled silence.

Merrill picked him up in his arms and carried him up the stairs, murmuring just once: "Remember! One sound and you are dead."

Rose, who had closed the door on their entrance, now brought forward cords she had made ready. Merrill gave her his automatic, bidding her kill the man if he made the least suspicious movement. Then he tied him hand and foot and gagged him. After that he put him to sleep with the hypodermic injection, and took him into the other room and undressed him. He retied him and disposed him comfortably in a big closet and returned to Rose.

"He is in the closet, wrapped up comfortably, and

his clothes are ready for you," he said. "I think they will fit you. The sooner we are off the better."

"Zu befehl, excellenz!" she answered, saluting, and then left him.

While she was gone Merrill examined the papers that were in the pockets of Von Schilling's clothes. Some of them pertained to Von Schilling and might be useful in passing the guards; others were in a sealed envelope, directed to the Crown Prince of Bavaria. He left the packet sealed, not doubting that its contents would be of importance in case they won through the lines.

When Rose returned he stared at her in admiration, for, if she did not look like the chauffeur, she did look a young German soldier. She had put something on her face that made it look tanned, and she had touched it up to give her the dull, submissive, oxlike expression so common in the ranks. And she had contrived to make the clothes fit well enough to pass muster.

She saluted as she stood before him, her face perfectly wooden and expressionless. "At your orders, excellency," she said in German.

"You are a wonder," he exclaimed. "I wish I could do my part as well as you do yours."

"Why," she cried, "you do splendidly. Besides, you are so resourceful that I am not a bit afraid. We shall get to Dixmude, anyhow."

"We must get past Dixmude or we shall be worse off than we are now. But we will win through somehow. By the way, do you happen to know the way to Dixmude? Do you know how to get out of the city in the right direction?"

"I can ask. There will be nothing strange in that. In a general way I know that Dixmude is to the southwest."

"What a brave girl you are!" he said softly.

"And what a man you are!" she answered, and the way she emphasized man left nothing to be desired. "Shall we go?"

"The sooner the better. I wonder if I dare risk speaking to our host? I hate to go without saying something."

"Far better not to," she cried earnestly. "The more ignorant these poor people are the better."

"Yes, I suppose you are right. Come, then!"

He closed and locked the door when they went out, and then, moving in Von Schilling's majestic way, he went down the stairs. If they were seen they were not spoken to. In the doorway, Merrill turned. "Your clothes?" he queried. "What have you done with them?"

"Underneath these; I used them for padding. That's why I'm so thick." She chuckled.

He laughed softly, and went on, keeping a sharp eye out for the soldiers who were on guard. They stood in the darkness on each side of the gateway, and came to stiff salute when Merrill passed out.

Rose went quickly to the car and stood at salute until Merrill had taken his place in it. Then she took her place, and they were off on their perilous ride for freedom.

TO BE CONTINUED.



Crawling Hands

By P.A. Connolly

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Two real-estate agents rent a mysterious house and are under oath not to permit any one to enter a certain room. The owner of the house lives in Italy, and is known well because of his spiderlike hands. Jim, one of the agents, tries the door and feels a mysterious pressure on the other side. Hayden, his partner, tries also and feels a cold hand clutch his throat. Finally they determine to enter together.

CHAPTER V.

THE MYSTERIOUS ROOM.

I TURNED the key and the knob at the same moment. There was a suggestion of resistance, which vanished almost instantly. The door was thrown open, and we both crossed the threshold.

A cold air, like a gust of wind, struck our faces. The room was dimly lighted from the partly opened slats of a blind at one of the windows.

And then a peculiar thing happened. A pair of heavy curtains, hanging before a closet or alcove, were drawn apart, and fell together again, as though separated by unseen hands.

Jim looked at me, and then with one bound, leaped toward the curtains and tore them apart. He disappeared from view, but reappeared almost instantly, brushing the front of his coat.

A

"Nothing in there, but I felt something like a big rat crawling up my coat. Ugh!"

We gazed around the room.

It was furnished in the style of the past century, with heavy walnut chairs and dresser, and a massive canopied bed, from which the curtains had been removed. And upon the bed lay the figure of a man, in the position which Avery had described. It took but one glance to see that he was dead.

Together, we lifted the body of Brooks, and carried it, without molestation, to the hall. Instantly the door closed behind us with a crash.

"Can't say that I admire his manners," Jim remarked as we bore the body of the man to the room which we assumed he had occupied in life.

We took Avery and his effects back to town with us, and left him at the house where his wife was visiting. I promised to get a doctor's certificate, and to see an undertaker, and have the body properly prepared for shipment to New York. Fortunately there were no marks upon it, and, as Brooks was known to have had serious heart trouble, no fears of embarrassing explanations were anticipated.

Upon my return to the office, I found a cablegram awaiting me. I tore it open with trembling fingers. It was from Italy, signed "Orland," and contained this brief statement:

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

I regarded the characters with quickening pulse. Was it possible that the man was aware of what had happened? Could he have an agent concealed in the house, to keep him informed of all that occurred? What object could he have?

Did he possess so keen a knowledge of, and power over, the unseen forces of the universe, that he could keep in constant telepathic communication with affairs in all parts of the world? And yet, what other explanation was there? My reading and belief did not forbid the thought.

I knew that Orland was in Europe; I had seen the notice of his arrival in Liverpool months before, and had received from him several letters acknowledging remittances, one of which arrived but three days before.

The cable bore the date of the preceding day—the day on which Brooks was murdered!

I laid it on my desk, and shuddered. In my imagination, I saw the yellow slip of paper assume the grisly shape of John Orland's hand. Was it possible that I, too, would fall a victim to that terrible unseen power, which we had left behind at Hedgewood?

But, no! I clinched my teeth. I was possessed of a still greater power, and I would cope with, and overcome, that other force—or lose my life in the effort.

For Jim and I had determined to spend that night in the room with the red-paneled door.

CHAPTER VI.

A GAME WITH THE GHOST.

IT was dusk when we arrived. In the closing darkness the house looked especially gloomy and uninviting.

The trees, stripped of their foliage, looked gaunt and spectral against the sky. There was no wind. The usual woodland sounds—the sighing of trees, the scraping of boughs, the twitter of birds and insects—were absent. An ominous silence brooded over the place.

I waited at the top of the steps, while Jim turned down the acetylene lamps of the car, leaving only the side lights burning. I noticed that he examined the gasoline and water tanks, and, as the engine had stopped, cranked it up, to see if it responded quickly.

Was he preparing for an emergency, I wondered? Was he going to flunk at the last minute? Courage in broad daylight sometimes evaporates under the spell of darkness.

But one glance at Jim's face, as he rejoined me, was reassuring. The square-set jaw, the eager look in his eyes, did not denote a failing courage.

The intense silence was broken by the shooting back of the heavy bolt in the front door. Together, we entered the hall, and stood a moment in the darkness. The house felt close and oppressive.

Walking over to the switch, I flooded the lower rooms with light.

Jim threw open several of the windows, and let in the cool autumn air. "There—that looks and feels better. How is your nerve, Dick?"

"I've got a grip on it," I replied, "but we're not to have such things as nerves to-night."

"Right you are, boy! Mine are at home; but I've brought this along as a substitute." He showed the butt of a heavy revolver.

I smiled. "What do you expect to do with that, Jim—shoot ghosts?"

"I'll shoot at anything that shows itself—man, or ghost, or—devil."

Jim went to the piano, and woke the echoes of the old house with selections of ragtime, while I found a congenial book in the library, and, for an hour or more, lost myself in its contents.

About ten o'clock, Jim sauntered in, smoking a pipe and looking bored. "There's nothing doing down here, Dick," he said. "Let's go upstairs."

I laid down my book instantly, and together we mounted the steps. On the landing, I turned the electric switch which lighted the hall. Back in the shadows, we could see the dull gleam of the red-paneled door.

Not a sound broke the stillness. The thick carpet on the hall floor buried the sound of our footfalls as we approached the room. For a moment we paused in front of it, while I selected the key.

Then, just as I was about to insert it into the lock, the knob rattled loudly. We looked at each other.

"Are you afraid, Jim?"

"No!"

"Because, if you are, you'd better not go in. Remember Brooks."

He paled slightly, and swallowed once or twice. "I'm not afraid, I tell you—I'm not! I'm not!"

"Very well. Here goes." I turned the key and the knob, and pressed against the door.

Again I felt a resistance, which gradually yielded and then ceased altogether; the door gave way under my weight, and I was precipitated into the room. The place was dark, but Jim had brought an electric flash light, which he was now darting around the room.

Suddenly he gave a startled exclamation. "Quick, Dick—look!" He pointed toward the bed.

It had been made up, probably years before. The linen and counterpane, once snowy white, were yellow with age. The impression of Brooks' body still remained.

Then, before our eyes, the pillows were taken up and laid at the foot of the bed, the covering was turned back, and the pillows returned and neatly arranged, just as a maid would arrange them. Only there was no maid—absolutely nothing!

Jim's hand was clutching my arm.

"Easy, old man—easy! This is only a part of the performance," I said. "We are going to remain for the whole show."

I do not want the reader to think that I am endowed with any superlative degree of courage. I am not. If I had obeyed my natural impulse, I should have fled in a panic at that instant. In fact, I should never have gone into the room. But I had undertaken this thing deliberately; I knew, or believed I knew, the conditions and consequences.

If this were mere trickery, a close and careful investigation would reveal it. If it were of supernatural origin, and some malevolent force were at work in this room, I was convinced that a cool and fearless attitude would overcome it.

The whole matter lay with one's nerves. If one had absolute control over them, the powers of darkness could inflict no injury. My studies and investigations into the occult assured me of this.

And it was because Jim had no such assurance—because his courage was purely physical—that I was apprehensive on his account.

As though in contradiction to my thoughts, he uttered a grim laugh.

"Well," he said, "if this is an invitation for us to go to bed, I'm going to accept." And, handing me the flash light, he deliberately walked over and threw himself upon the bed.

"It's too early, Jim," I said, vastly relieved at this display of sheer nerve. "I'm not a bit sleepy, and, besides, we have some work to do."

Suddenly he sprang to his feet and brushed his clothes violently.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"The rats in this house are awfully cheeky," he said. "I felt two as big as cats crawling up my legs."

I had seen no rats, although I had kept the circle of the light full upon him.

We had brought a coil of wire and some electric fixtures, and while I held the door open Jim tapped the hall wires, with the result that, in a few minutes, we felt more comfortable in a well-lighted and ventilated room.

A large, old-fashioned grate occupied one end of the room, and, as on our first visit we had discovered a fuel box in one of the empty rooms, we presently had a cheerful fire burning.

I had brought the book from the library which had so interested me, and, lighting my pipe and finding an easy-chair, I prepared for such comfort as I might enjoy under the circumstances.

From time to time, I looked up at Jim, who was reclining on a couch, smoking placidly.

"Jim," I asked presently, "did you ever read 'The Haunted and the Haunters'?"

"No," he replied. "What's it about?"

"It's a ghost story, with two men in a similar position to our own. One of them ran."

"And left the other in the lurch? He must have been a rum guy. But that's the way with stories; they're always making a hero of one and a coward of the other fellow. Say, Dick," he continued, with a yawn, "let's have a game of Pedro."

"Good thought," I answered. "Got a deck of cards?"

"Yes. I brought 'em along for the purpose."

While we were arranging the table and chairs, Jim walked over to what appeared to be a heavy, boxlike frame on the far wall.

"Hello!" he said, and then: "It's a picture, with its face turned toward the wall." He proceeded at once to turn the picture—for such it was—face outward.

It proved to be a full-length portrait of a young man of twenty-five or thereabouts dressed richly in the style of the latter part of the eighteenth century. The face was an evil one, the eyes hard, the mouth cruel and treacherous. It was the likeness, undoubtedly, of one of the Ormonds, as the family characteristic stood forth prominently. The hands—enormous, monstrous hands—were depicted with careful detail, as if the owner had been proud of them.

The repugnant face, and those fearful hands, made a distinctly disagreeable impression upon me, and I asked Jim to return the picture to its former position. He endeavored to do so, but found it immovable. Again he tried, with all his strength, and failed. And at that moment a horrid laugh sounded through the room.

Jim turned on me, his lips twitching. "What did you do that for?" he demanded.

"I didn't," I said. "But, come—if it is any satisfaction to the owner of that face to have it exposed to view, why, let it hang. Let's get to our game."

We drew up our chairs. Jim sat with his back to the picture, the hands of which drew my eyes like a magnet; the whole figure brooded over us like an evil spirit. We played indifferently for an hour; then Jim stopped to fill and light his pipe.

As he was about to reach for the deck, which lay in the center of the table, it was quickly lifted, and, unsupported in the air, the cards began to fall in two piles. We watched them, with staring eyes and rigid muscles.

Some unseen being was sorting the cards!

"The pinochle deck," whispered Jim. "It wants to get into the game."

As though in confirmation of the words, the pack containing the face cards was taken up and shuffled skillfully. It was then passed to me to be cut. I cut. Again the pack was raised, and two cards drifted to me, two others falling at the empty space between Jim and me. This was repeated until I had twelve cards. The other twelve were then raised, slipped rapidly between invisible fingers, just as a skillful player would do, and then hung motionless, fan shape.

"I'm not in it, it seems. Play the game, Dick, if you know what it is."

"I think I do, but I'll know in a second." I picked up and sorted the cards, made a discard, and led an ace. Immediately a small card in the same suit dropped on my lead. The strange game continued.

"Don't feel slighted, Jim," I said. "It's an old form of piquet, and meant only for two."

Suddenly Jim leaned forward and looked into the hand of my opponent. I heard a smacking sound like a blow, and Jim drew back with a cry, a livid mark on his face. Then, before I could say a word, he sprang to his feet, and, drawing his revolver, shot once, twice, into the center of the suspended hand of cards!

They flew in all directions, and at the same instant the revolver was snatched from Jim's hand; he reeled violently backward, and fell to the floor with a crash.

For a moment he lay there, then arose slowly on his elbow, and stared stupidly around. Suddenly his eyes bulged; he got to his hands and knees, and backed toward the wall, crab fashion. His eyes remained fastened, staring, on some object which seemed to be creeping upon him.

Then a bloodcurdling shriek came from his lips, an with a cry of: "Take them away, Dick—take them away!" he arose, pulled open the door, and dashed down the hall and the stairs.

In another second I heard the crash of the front door, the sound of the quick explosions of the engine in the automobile, its rapidly retreating echo, and then silence—utter, absolute silence.

It had all happened so quickly that I had been petrified into inaction.

With a cry of fear—sniveling, insensate fear—I leaped to the door, only to have it slammed in my face. With desperate, heart-breaking effort, I endeavored to wrench it open. Useless!

I was entrapped, alone, in the room with the red-paneled door!

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT WAS IT?

SLOWLY I regained my equilibrium and calm, but not without the strongest exercise of will power and reasoning. Why I was not crushed, annihilated in that moment of demoralization, I shall never know. I know only that, for some purpose, the unseen power in the room was quiescent. But not for long.

As I turned, with my back to the door, I became dimly aware of some presence in the room. The temperature began to fall rapidly, although the fire burned brightly.

By this time I had recovered fully my grip upon my nerves, and I awaited, tensely but calmly, whatever was to follow. Then quickly, like a candle, the fire was snuffed out.

"Come," I said. "That trick has been worked threadbare. Can't you originate something new? I suppose," I continued, merely for something to say, "that the light will go next, although I am curious to know how you will get around a comparatively new element like electricity."

As though in answer to my words, the thirty-two-candle-power lamp went out. I was in black darkness!

With an effort, I repulsed the sudden rush of fear which assailed my heart; I ignored resolutely the hideous sensation that played up and down my spine; and, groping my way over to where the lamp hung, I reached for it—at first confidently, then, as it evaded my grasp, with frantic, desperate hands which stabbed and clawed the midnight gloom.

At last, with a sigh of infinite relief, my hands closed round the still warm globe. *The key had not been turned.*

Back to the door I went, with a leap, and peered through the keyhole. The lights in the hall were burning. I reached up and caught the cord, which passed through the crack made by the door settling away from the jamb. I pulled this gently, then walked, with the cord passing through my fingers, until I came again to the lamp. The circuit was intact. Yet I could get no light!

All this time I was conscious of a presence near me; I felt some thing following my every step. I knew instinctively that, if I gave way for a moment to the fear which was driving me, the thing would leap upon me.

I backed to the wall again, and waited. I had no knowledge of the time, of how long I had been alone.

The silence and the darkness became unbearable. If the thing that was in the room with me would only show itself—would utter some sound—it would be a relief. This waiting, this suspense, was more terrible than any sight or sound could possibly be; and I knew that, unless something happened quickly, my nerves would give way.

Then, after what seemed to be hours, when I felt that I must shriek aloud, I saw in the far corner of the room a dim, misty figure shaping itself into the darkness.

At first I could make nothing of it, but gradually it resolved itself into the figure of a boy—a boy of about ten years of age, with yellow curls hanging about his face. He was dressed in a rich black velvet suit, silk hose, and a pair of high-heeled, silver-buckled shoes.

The face was handsome, but too matured for one so young. The eyes were hard and cruel, the mouth treacherous. Somewhere I had seen those features before.

My eyes lifted for a moment to the place on the

wall where the picture hung. I took a quick inhalation.

Although the rest of the room was in pitch darkness the picture stood out boldly in a light seemingly emanating from itself. The eyes were gazing upon the figure of the boy below, and, it seemed to me, the lips twisted into a sardonic grin.

I understood now. The boy was the original of the picture, which was made at a later period in his life.

My attention was now called to the figure of the boy. He seemed to be calling some one.

Presently, into the field of vision romped a big Newfoundland puppy, with which the boy played for a few minutes. In the play the dog leaped upon the boy, bore him to the ground, and soiled his clothes sadly.

In an instant he was on his feet, his face distorted with rage, his eyes gleaming savagely. He sprang upon the dog, and the monstrous Orland hands, looking particularly grotesque on one so small, clenched around the dog's neck, the fingers interlaced at the back. Nor did the terrible grip relax until the dog rolled over and lay still.

The boy got to his feet, and was viciously kicking the unresponsive figure when a woman, apparently a servant, appeared on the scene and seemed to remonstrate with him. He flew at her in a rage, with great hands outstretched, but she fled in terror.

Suddenly he cringed and trembled violently, looking about with furtive eyes for a way to escape as the figure of a man stood before him—a tall man, stern and dignified. The newcomer was an Orland, and, apparently, the father of the boy. He pointed accusingly to the dog. The boy cowered in terror.

Then all the figures vanished, and I was again in blank darkness. During all this time not a sound had broken the intense silence.

Again my staring eyes saw a vague form taking shape; again the picture flamed into view. This time the vision was that of a young man of twenty-eight or thirty. It was the exact counterpart of the picture on the wall, only more evil, more sinister looking.

Presently he was joined by a young and beautiful woman. She seemed to be pleading for something. He repulsed her. She fell to her knees, her hands uplifted. Then there leaped into his face the same look which I had seen when he strangled the puppy, and, with a snarl which I could almost hear, he fell upon her and bore her to the earth, his horrid fingers encircling her fair young throat.

I tried to tear my eyes away, but could not, and there, before my sickening vision, I beheld a reëactment of the terrible crime which had been committed in this room years before.

Presently the form of the woman lay quiet, and the man arose to a crouching position. His eyes glared, and then changed to an expression of terror. Before him stood the figure of his father, his finger pointing accusingly to the still form of the woman.

Again utter blackness for what seemed to be an interminable period. Again I saw an emanation from nothingness, which grew into a filmy form—this time of the elder Orland. He stood pondering deeply. Then a look of resolve—of terrible, unchanging re-

solve—gathered upon his face. He clapped his hands. A servant appeared and received some instructions.

Presently there slunk into the room the figure of the younger Orland. He seemed to be livid with terror. Some words were spoken. Then the older man took a handkerchief, and blindfolded the younger. Without resistance he was led to a heavy table, where he was made to kneel down.

At a word of command, the huge, monstrous hands were extended and laid, palm downward, upon the table. Then the father, taking a large sword from the wall, stepped to the side of his son, and, with one blow, sheared off both hands!

I cried aloud.

Instantly the light flashed out; the fire burned cheerily in the grate. The picture on the wall looked down sardonically. Was it, then, all a dream?

I looked around for Jim. He was not there. I looked at my watch. But five minutes had elapsed since he left me. Again I tried the door and the window. Both were immovable.

For one moment I considered jumping to the ground, but I discarded the idea immediately on account of the height.

And again the fire in the grate disappeared; it was snuffed out like a candle. The electric light followed, and thick darkness once more enveloped me.

Watching intently, I saw the shapeless mist gather in the far corner, take form, and assume the semblance of life. This time it was the figure of a bent old man, with scanty gray locks. He was sitting on a bench, crooning back and forth over some object which lay in his lap.

Suddenly he raised his head and peered eagerly, almost wistfully, at the picture on the wall, which, in the midst of the glow surrounding it, leered back mockingly. The figure raised its arms, as if in supplication, and I saw that both hands were gone at the wrists.

It was the face of Orland, the uxoricide—old, hardened, evil, as it must have looked in the later years of his life. The old eyes fell again to the objects on his lap, which he fondled with his stumps of arms. They took life, and began to crawl up the front of his coat, and I saw, to my horror, that they were severed hands—large, hairy, monstrous hands!

For a time they nestled one on either shoulder. The old man still weaved back and forth, his twisted mouth mumbling words. Suddenly he stopped, and listened intently.

One of the hands seemed to be imparting information to him, for it writhed and ran up and down his body. Then it stopped, and poised, motionless, on his knees, and I saw that it had raised itself on three fingers and thumb, its long, bony index finger pointing outward.

It was a moment before I realized the fearful significance of this. When I did so I almost collapsed. The great, grisly hand, with rigid index finger, was pointing directly at me!

Slowly the old eyes followed the direction of the finger; slowly, slowly they came toward me, and at last looked full into mine. In vain I tried to lower

my lids, to turn my eyes away. Those fierce, cruel devilish orbs held them immovable.

The old man leaped quickly to his feet. A look such as I had seen when he strangled the dog and the woman distorted his features.

He sprang toward me, then stopped short and looked at his useless arms. He gnashed his teeth in rage, but quickly whispered something to the two hands, which were hanging to his shoulders.

They seemed to understand, for immediately they crept rapidly from their perch, down his body and to the floor. For an instant only they paused. Then, like monstrous spiders, they crawled slowly in my direction.

The figure of the old man was dancing in fiendish glee. The picture on the wall seemed to gloat.

And now I felt the hands crawling up my legs, the long nails of each finger digging sharply into my flesh.

My own hands seemed to be powerless. As the Orland hands hitched themselves heavily, cumbrously over my stomach and heart I felt that I must soon give way. I do not know that I screamed; probably I did, for the inside of my throat ached intolerably.

If I could only get power into my own hands! I was no weakling; I could cope successfully with strong men. To use my hands before those others reached my throat! The vulnerable point! I thought of Brooks, of Jim—the coward! I gasped for breath. Oh, God, help!

With one supreme effort, I broke the power that held me.

With desperate, superhuman strength, my own hands shot to those monstrous things, which were already clutching my throat. With one last effort of will, I tore first one, then the other from my throat and, with a shriek of horror and loathing, dashed away from me.

I heard a crash of glass. The picture before me dissolved from view. I reeled and fell, just as a loud "honk! honk!" sounded on the air.

I was dimly conscious of a crash of doors, of a blinding light, of Jim's voice—then utter, complete oblivion.

EPILOGUE.

I HAVE no explanations to make, no theories to advance. I must add, however, that the portrait which I mentioned in my narrative was found to have been torn from top to bottom, and the heavy glass protecting it shattered into a thousand pieces. Back of the canvas was a cavity, in which rested the skeletons of two immense hands, and a manuscript which, so far, has defied all attempts to decipher. It may contain an explanation of the facts which I have related.

I no longer take any interest in the occult. My one thought and hope now is to live down, if I may, the recollection of that night of horror.

One word more. The last Orland was found dead in bed in a little hotel in Italy on the same night I spent in the room with the red-paneled door.

His house has since been razed, and the grounds cut up into building lots.

THE END.

The Street Without a Name

By Harold Hersey

What would you do if you were invited by a friend in a personal note to attend his funeral upon the following day? Would you do exactly as he directed, or would you seek to explore the mystery against his wishes? Here is the problem as it actually occurred—the story of a great friendship and the clash between the practical Western mind and the crafty, unseen world of the Orient.



CHAPTER I.

THE ONE MISTAKE.

THE return of Albert Rawlinson was typical of the man. He suddenly appeared in Edgeville, making the quiet statement that his father had perished in an accident abroad and that he intended making his home in the little town again. His arrival brought also a freightload of curious things from the Orient, presided over by an impassive servant whom he had picked up in Thibet—one Wang Soo, devoted to his slightest wish, impervious to questions, absolutely silent concerning his master. He was a sort of ninth wonder in the village.

The old house had been closed for twenty years. As a boy of ten Albert had left it; as a man of thirty he returned to it. The porch that circled its weather-beaten sides had fallen into decay, weeds growing up even between the boards. The shutters hung dismally on their hinges, rattling in the wind over empty window frames. Children feared the spot, making wide detours to avoid it. The building stood in an isolated section at the north corner of Edgeville, the high poplars surrounding serving to make it all the more segregated from the ordinary life of the place. The usual ghost stories had collected as fast as the decay. The children carried on the idea, the more fearless daring to approach and throw a stone through an empty window now and then.

Rawlinson took possession at once, hiring a large force of men to repair what could be repaired, tearing down whole sections and reconstructing them, cleaning and making over the homestead until one would never have recognized what had existed before. Within a month, he so changed its appearance that it was a joy to the eye. Wang Soo understood the art of gardening with that consummate knowledge attained by your true Oriental. He worked night and day.

The result was a marvel of effects which attracted the inquisitive sight-seer for miles around. Edgeville became famous because of its garden, which, in reality, was even better than its reputation.

The fact that Kennedy knew Albert Rawlinson "intimately" was no test of what he really understood in the man. Albert Rawlinson was what might rightly be termed a "queer" character—taciturn, prone to sudden and inexplicable anger, but faithful in his one friendship with Kennedy up to the very last.

It was well known that if he started to do anything he did it well. There were curious tales told about his early efforts to learn the secrets of those Eastern religions. It was said that the long scar under his chin came from an unexpected encounter with a certain monk of Lhasa, who objected to his prowling about some temple. Rawlinson neither denied this nor affirmed it. It is true, however, that his education as a boy had taken place in the Orient. Where, no one knew exactly.

The unexpected death of the mother had soured the father. Rawlinson, senior, grew to detest his native city—poor little Edgeville—tucked away in a forgotten valley of the Middle West. He despised its routine existence, its conventions. He even wrote a book against Puritanism, which fell flat upon the market. It was no more than the whinings of a dissatisfied widower. Even Rawlinson had to admit this, when

at rare intervals he mentioned his father's one attempt at becoming a philosopher. The older Rawlinson hated public opinion, affected to ignore it, but consistently was aware of it more than anything else. He closed the old home in Edgeville—even locked the iron gates and hired a man with a family to watch the place—and disappeared, carrying young, impressionistic Albert with him into parts unknown.

It was with such a parent that the boy lived his early days. Now and again rumors floated in from unexpected sources, purporting to give definite news of the two wanderers, but they were admittedly rumors. It was evident that the father and son never intended to return to the home country.

To Kennedy, Albert Rawlinson was a kind of a hero—a shadowy hero out of the mists. He knew him as a lad at school. They had parted when each was about ten years of age. For some reason or other this had made an intense impression on both of them. It may have been that Kennedy had a vein of sympathy in his nature which pleased Albert without sickening him, and Albert had a streak of wanderlust in him which struck the home boy with insistent charm. Whether or not it was any distinct and understood quality which drew the two boys together, the fact remained that, at school, they were inseparable. It was to Kennedy that Albert brought his first dreams, his beginning aspirations toward manhood. Albert was not popular in school. He possessed an odd, supercilious manner, a secretive way, an oldish poise which drove away comradeship. The other boys looked upon him as a strange person, alien to their circles. Kennedy had rushed to his defense a number of times when they poked fun at him. Once they had thrown stones at him. Kennedy, without thinking of self, rushed in and scattered the crowd. He was large and strong and not gifted with a supreme amount of imagination.

They even kept up a desultory correspondence. Kennedy was the only person in Edgeville who ever heard from the Rawlinsons, but Albert had said in his first letter that he would never write again if he heard of his exhibiting any of his letters. This was enough for Kennedy. He read them over many times and then filed them carefully away in his safe. His practice as a lawyer had convinced him that it is better to keep your mouth closed than to talk.

Kennedy had been away when Rawlinson returned. He had received no word of his intention either by letter or telegram. This, however, did not surprise him, knowing the man's character as he did. When he reached home again he called and found his old schoolmate changed more than he expected. The eyes seemed to have lost their luster, and he particularly noticed the nervous habit of twitching his hands or folding a handkerchief into endless squares when he was talking. He shook hands rather perfunctorily, it seemed to Kennedy.

"You look almost the same," remarked Rawlinson after a short silence in which he seemed to bore Kennedy through and through with his eyes. "I recall the chin, the curly hair, the nose. You have prospered. That is good."

"I am glad that you have returned," his friend broke in after another silence.

"That's right. I am, too. I became weary of those endless yellow faces and pigtails out there across the seas. When father was unexpectedly killed, trying to break into some place where he hadn't been invited, I decided to pack up our stuff and come back to Edgeville. I have collected a great library dealing with Buddhism and occult science, and I rather plan writing a book on the subject."

"Great stuff! But how effectively you are renovating the old place."

"Yes," Rawlinson drawled. "I think we will make quite an improvement over the first appearance that greeted me. I don't recall ever having seen such a ruin, except in the mountains of Mongolia, where everything goes to ruin, even the men themselves."

Kennedy turned with these words. Behind him stood the quaint Chinaman of whom he had already heard—Wang Soo. Rawlinson seemed a trifle angry at his unannounced approach. He spat out a few words in an unearthly tongue, and the impassive servant disappeared as strangely as he had come. Kennedy failed to shake off the impression of the Chinaman's face for a whole week.

They strolled through the grounds, watching the men at work and reminiscing over their school days.

After a while Kennedy got into his buggy and drove off down the road. Looking backward over his shoulder, he observed that Rawlinson was standing where he had left him, his hands joined behind his back, his head bowed as though he were thinking.

Kennedy saw him suddenly shift his position. Wang Soo had appeared from behind a clump of trees near where they stood. Kennedy's last view of them as he turned a bend in the road was of their heads close together in animated conversation, the face of the Chinaman peering up at Rawlinson with strange fervor.

Kennedy shook himself. It did not seem real at all. This wasn't a bit like anything that he had been accustomed to. He had to confess that he did not like the subservience of the Chinaman. It wasn't American at all. The house was beginning to look like a mixture of Chinese and a half dozen other national styles of architecture thrown in. Rawlinson had insisted upon a pergola in the garden. There was no doubt of the fact that Wang Soo created a work of art in his garden, but, for some reason or other, he had argued against the pergola in the clump of trees that grew near the gate. Rawlinson had appealed to Kennedy at a later date. They had argued over the business. It resulted in the little house being built. The old house was recreated. The great porch circled newly painted sides, and already the quickly growing ivy was beginning to lift its green fingers as though anxious to creep up until it surrounded even the immense windows on the second floor. Within, a splendor greeted the eyes which almost took the breath away. Here was every form of art known to the Orient, dragged to this conventional little country town. He excused himself to Kennedy on one occasion by remarking that at least the place would make an excellent museum after his death.

The two men saw quite a good deal of each other, but it took a year's time before they gained any sort of an intimacy again. It was then that the country

lawyer learned that his boyhood chum seemed to recall some incident in his life which struck fear into his heart.

"I don't talk much," he remarked one night. "Just the same, I made one mistake in my life which I would give a whole fortune to wipe out. That's why I really came home."

Kennedy could get no more out of him. He simply sat and smoked his pipe amid all the grotesque examples of art which he had brought back.

"I think it is all over now," he said in closing his first and only confidence. "However, you can't tell about these things. A white man goes over there and tampers with the unseen and strange. Usually he gets away without being hurt, because he doesn't go far enough. But, man, I went the limit! I——" He stopped. "There's no use arguing the matter; let's have a game of chess."

CHAPTER II.

HANDS OUT OF THE DARKNESS.

IT was about two years after the return of Rawlinson that the strange sequence of events occurred which amazed and terrified the entire country, creating a mystery which was never to be understood until the patient, unimaginative Kennedy stumbled upon the answer through one of those unexplained twists of fate which bring seemingly unrelated facts together.

The friendship between Kennedy and Rawlinson developed into one of those fine things only possible to men who have lived and learned. They said little. It was unnecessary. Their conversations would have baffled a hearer who did not perceive the differing qualities in their natures. Rawlinson, inclined not to talk, and Kennedy, inclined to listen. Once this is understood, a clear insight will be gained into their comradeship.

In the beginning, Kennedy learned not to mention the days abroad except at rare intervals when his friend chose to ramble on about his adventures. It became the custom for Kennedy to drop in two or three nights a week for a smoke and a game of chess. Then, too, Kennedy loved the gloomy library, with the high shelves of books, the extravagant bric-a-brac, the atmosphere of the Oriental and strange. He liked especially the huge table which occupied the center of the floor, piled with foreign magazines and odd volumes. He dipped into their contents once or twice, but the long descriptions of the foreign customs and beliefs rather bored him. He confessed this to Rawlinson once.

"That is the way it affects most people—over here," the latter answered. "In order to understand what lies in those volumes and in the reason why I have to surround myself with this atmosphere in a conventional Middle West village, it would be necessary for you to transport yourself to my boyhood across the seas and observe closely the development of my ideas. You would have to know my tutors, particularly the famous L'hun Rass, whose school of thought is famous in his own land, but unknown here. I was fortunate enough to attend his classes, and my father's wealth even attached him to our household for a while. There were others. I was let loose in their world of

thought and feeling. I grew up with their children. I knew their language almost better than my own. Even now I find it easier to convey my thoughts to Wang Soo than to any one else. That is why I brought him with me to this country. I may have cause to regret it some day, but when I came to leave it seemed impossible for me to break off every connecting link."

He paused for a moment, puffing at his long pipe and gazing straight ahead of him.

"You see, we Occidentals never know where to stop. We either destroy or are destroyed. I have explored the innermost secrets of those ancient civilizations, going down, down, down, into their religions, their thoughts, their ideas. They have learned all, my friend—all there is to know. They have passed through all that we have known, and more than we shall ever know, because they believe more in feeling than in action. If they believe a thing, they are willing to die for it. Once hurt them, and you will suffer, even though you go to the end of the world——"

Kennedy turned. The portières over the hall door had parted and the slim, silent form of Wang Soo stood there, his countenance expressing no life, no hope or thought.

"Did you call me?" he asked.

Rawlinson got to his feet, his face purple in the lamplight. "I did not. Get back to your quarters."

As silently as he came, the Chinaman disappeared, leaving not even a motion in the still folds of the portières that hung there. Kennedy had a curious sensation of hands that seemed to grip his throat. He fidgeted in his chair. For a moment the idea refused to leave him. He almost gasped for air. Rawlinson was pacing the floor, his dark face livid with anger.

"That damned servant of mine has yet to learn a few things," he thundered. "He is too efficient. I will teach him a lesson or two."

This ended the business. The two men never discussed this part of Rawlinson's belief again. It was a closed door.

Rawlinson had at first shut himself up in his large old home and refused to see any one except Kennedy. After a while he took to his friend's children, and at rare intervals would visit his house, going to the extent of inviting them all to his place for dinner.

This marked a distinct change in his manner of living. He opened up his refurbished residence by giving a splendid entertainment. Mrs. Kennedy was invited to act as hostess. Over a hundred were invited and, as was the usual thing in Rawlinson's life, the affair added more to the reputation which was being forced upon him as an eccentric character.

One of the things which puzzled Kennedy was his refusal to allow any one to enter the pergola in the garden. This was kept locked at all times. On this occasion he even roped off the corner where it was situated. However, everywhere else he had strung Chinese lanterns, so splendid in size and color that they were the subject of discussion for months thereafter in the country circles. The house was exactly the spot for a barbaric display, and he took complete advantage of the fact.

The immense hallway had been hung with fabulously wonderful tapestries depicting events in various dynasties. A rug covered the steps, probably worth a for-

tune in itself. The drawing-room, the library, and the dining room were thrown wide open, the large folding doors creating an almost consecutive chamber.

The lights were arranged in such a manner as not to accentuate any individual thing. As a result huge shadows were created along the walls. Dark spots would appear through which the guests passed like ghosts in an unseen world, coming forth suddenly into the light as they moved here and there. Great vases stood in the corners, carved with all the fiendish ingenuity of those dead geniuses of long ago whose history perished with them. A painting occupied the center wall of the drawing-room, and, above all else, was the subject of powerful wonder. It was a simple thing—a Chinese interior of a temple. The artist had laid stress on the mystical. One had to look closely to discern any figures, but once they were seen they never left the eye. The colors were startling in their contrasts. It was the peculiar example of an Oriental mind, perhaps the best one which Rawlinson could have procured.

"We miss the beauties of these compositions," he explained to a little knot gathered about this one. "The Oriental artist paints his pictures on the floor, and the proper way to observe a work of art of this nature is to see it as though one were looking across a rug."

With this he pressed a button, and the huge canvas seemed to go back on hinges into a darkened aperture. There were exclamations of surprise. Some of the women seemed a little frightened. Suddenly a low light was switched on, and they could see the immense picture lying flat at their feet. The effect was magical. Almost instantly the entire thing stood out in sharp relief. It was truly wonderful.

Rawlinson seemed to enjoy his triumph of the evening. Kennedy was able to explain this afterward. It may have been there that he first met Betty Owens, though Kennedy was not sure. She was present, but in the rush it would have been so easy for her to remain unobserved—a temperamental girl just back from boarding school, where she had finished her course with high honors.

It was not until a week later that Kennedy saw them together for the first time. He was driving along the road in his weather-beaten little gig when he heard the raucous honk of a horn behind him. He turned aside just in time to let the powerful roadster which Rawlinson had just purchased rush by him in a sudden burst of speed that took the quiet lawyer's breath away. He did observe, however, that Miss Owens was clinging to her hat and laughing gayly up into the taciturn face of his friend. At first he was inclined to wonder. Mrs. Kennedy quieted his fears quite effectively.

"Why, it is the best thing that could happen," she remonstrated. "Goodness me, the Owens family are just about on their last resources! I always said it was a foolish thing to send that girl off to school and raise her to expect things which could not possibly be hers. However, if Albert Rawlinson should marry her, it would not only tone him down and get some of these crazy notions out of his head, but it would raise up the hopes of old Mrs. Owens, who turns up her nose at our small doings."

"I suppose you are right," Kennedy said. "I like him, strangely enough, more than any one else, and I would most certainly like to see him settle down and be happy. He is not contented with his lot. You would think that a man who owned a fortune the size of his would be the easiest going fellow in the world. I know, just the same, that he lives with some silly superstition in his mind. Once or twice he has been on the verge of telling me, but that servant of his either breaks in upon our conversation or closes up like a clam for no visible reason."

Whatever the opinions of the quiet Kennedys were the fact remained that, within a month, it was the talk of the country that "Rawlinson was simply wild over that Owens girl." This, added to the bizarre housewarming which he had given, increased his notoriety. He was the sole topic of conversation.

The first inkling of the official angle of the affair came when Mrs. Owens was seen to drive up to the house in the Rawlinson car. The old lady disappeared within, and was not seen until late that night. Kennedy caught a glimpse of her as she was escorted by her prospective son-in-law to his car. The lawyer was returning from a late conference. He stopped in the shadow of the trees, his inquisitive nature getting the best of him. All he saw was the gallant way in which his friend helped the stately old dame into the low, wicked-looking car. A second later it came out of the gate in a cloud of dust and disappeared down the road.

Soon after this Rawlinson invited Kennedy to his house for dinner. There he met Mrs. Owens and her daughter. It was the first time he had had the opportunity of talking with her since her childhood. She was not a beautiful girl. Her charm lay, rather, in her manner. She had a way of tossing her head which was delightful to the eye. She was vivacious, animated, high-spirited. He looked across the table at his fat little wife and made a mental note that, after all, a man needed quietness in his home. Nevertheless, the charm of Betty was compelling. She kept up a running fire of laughter, seemingly forgetting her previous habit of silence. She was wearing a Chinese cloak when she came in, evidently a present from the master of the house. Her dress was of dark silk, fitting snugly to her athletic form, and accentuating the girlish lines of her body. She was good to look upon and Rawlinson seemed madly in love with her.

As Kennedy had suspected, this was the occasion of their announcement. Rawlinson broke the news quietly, stating that the marriage would take place within a week. The reason for so close a date was that they planned a brief trip to Europe, after which he must complete a book upon which he was working, as the date for publication had already been set.

Kennedy was not certain afterward, but it may have been at this very moment that Wang Soo dropped a huge platter in the corner of the room, breaking into a thousand pieces the dishes that he was carrying. Rawlinson's face grew dark. He sprang to his feet, clutching the collar of the servant's coat, and, swinging him around in his powerful hands, shaking him like a rat.

The Chinaman's face had undergone a change; black

lines seemed to have come under his eyes, and the lips stretched back from the teeth.

"You have destroyed my most precious dinner set," Rawlinson bellowed. "What do you mean by it?"

There ensued a rapid conversation in a strange tongue which master and servant used. It ended by Wang Soo clearing up the debris and disappearing.

"I don't like him," Betty declared after he had gone. "He looks at one so strangely."

Rawlinson seemed to have forgotten the incident entirely when we went into the drawing-room for coffee. He took us over to the cabinet and began describing the many priceless things which he had collected and stored there. He kept Betty by his side, and laughed at the jokes which were made at their expense. Mrs. Owens seemed quite satisfied and happy. She sat by the window, tapping her feet upon the floor and smiling to herself. It was her day of victory. He was in the midst of a vivid description of something which he held in his hand toward the light when one of his servant maids rushed into the room with a white face.

"The Chinaman has gone," the poor girl cried. "He disappeared right before my eyes."

"What crazy stuff is this?" Rawlinson remarked casually, as he put back the bit of art and closed the cabinet. Kennedy had his wits about him and watched his face. He was certain that he saw a look of fright flash across the impassive countenance, but its appearance was so momentary that he could not have sworn to it if he had tried.

"I was standing by the stove when the Chinaman came out and put a lot of broken dishes in the trash box on the porch. I turned around to speak to him and he had gone. I ran all over, looking for him, but he isn't anywhere to be found. You know I never liked him anyhow."

Rawlinson left the room with one bound. Kennedy followed, determined to see the thing to a finish. He turned around as he went out, and saw the servant girl fall, fainting, into a chair. He came upon Rawlinson again, standing on the side porch looking at the clump of trees surrounding his pergola. It did not make much of an impression upon Kennedy at the time, but he remembered the incident later.

"It is true," Rawlinson remarked. "Wang Soo has disappeared!"

Kennedy observed him closely. Was it a trick of his imagination that a white streak of hair had suddenly appeared on Rawlinson's broad forehead?

CHAPTER III.

THE HEIGHTS OF HAPPINESS.

RAWLINSON was taken unawares by the chain of events following the disappearance of the Chinaman.

"Wang Soo made me suspicious in the beginning," he confessed to Kennedy later. "It was reckless of me to bring him over here anyhow. I don't know why I did it, unless it was to satisfy my innate craving for the bizarre, which demands satisfaction, even though it kills peace of mind. He came up to me in Hongkong just before the steamer left and applied for a position—showed me his papers. They were

good. I took him, but I know that I have made the greatest mistake of my life."

Kennedy was forced to admit that he couldn't see anything ominous in the vanishing of the servant. It came as a relief to both him and his wife. They talked it over that evening without reaching any solution.

"There isn't any mystery," Mrs. Kennedy said by way of closing the matter forever. "The chink simply walked off. I shouldn't be surprised if Rawlinson missed some money, too. You know what trouble we had with that laundryman down Main Street."

Rawlinson proceeded, however, with the marriage preparations. The mother of Betty sent forth only a few cherished invitations. It was to be a quiet affair, as Rawlinson seemed to be bothered by an attack of nerves. He laughed about it.

"All I need is a trip away," he remarked. "I'm so used to tramping over the world that these two years of quiet have rather unsettled me. Just wait till I return and I'll be a changed man."

Kennedy never forgot this phrase. It stuck in his mind when the whole house of Rawlinson had tumbled into the dust like a castle of cards.

The day of the wedding was perfect. The sun came out as the large car drew up at the door, and Betty and Albert, amid the laughter of the guests, jumped in and spun down the road. Kennedy had tried to be an impartial observer of the ceremony, but he acknowledged that Betty had been most beautiful. She seemed transfigured with happiness. There was no doubt about it—she loved Rawlinson with her whole heart. He was visibly older. The gray hairs were beginning to outnumber the black, and his eyes were hardly still a moment. It was as though he had something on his mind which no amount of effort could shake off. His conversation was couched in short, abrupt sentences, and he twitched his lips in a silly way while speaking, as though it were difficult to enunciate clearly. Kennedy's wife had the courage or rather the effrontery to say that she hoped marriage would bring his health back to him. Her husband nudged her sharply, but she was not to be daunted.

Rawlinson looked at her suddenly. "How can I help but improve? See how lucky I am."

He put his arm around Betty and drew her slim body close to him. It was at the very moment when they were waiting to leave for their honeymoon. Betty was blushing, radiant, smilingly happy.

"Albert is too good," she whispered, unable to find her voice.

"Well, you tell him to gather himself together and return to Edgeville in perfect health," Mrs. Kennedy continued. "Ever since the Chinese servant left he has been different. I—"

"Forget that incident, unless you want to drive me insane," Rawlinson cried at the top of his voice, as though to drown out a sudden fear phantom whose hands groped along the channels of his reason. The people started. He did not wait for any questions, but, still holding Betty, he ran out with her, jumped into the waiting car, and was soon lost to view.

This was the last the Kennedys heard of them until a letter came from Paris saying that they might return within a month or so and requesting him as a

favor to open up the old house, hire some servants, et cetera.

Kennedy's visit to Rawlinson's home was quite an event in his life. He poked the huge key into the lock with a curious sensation of dread that refused to be explained.

"I declare, I believe I am getting to be as nervous as he is. This will never do." The unimaginative Kennedy was disgusted with himself, and he strode into the wide hallway, determined to attend to his business and get off as soon as possible.

The building was silent as a tomb. The windows had been closed for these long months, and the air lacked freshness. It was while he was on the second floor that he first came upon the stern realization that some one else had been there since he personally locked the doors after the wedding. Not only that, but the person or persons were in the building at that very moment. The proof of this? There was none. Kennedy cursed his stupidity.

"I declare," he said under his breath. "I am getting as bad as Rawlinson. Here I am, imagining that some one is in the house at this very moment, when I know only too well that I am the only living soul who has entered it since they went to Europe."

He proceeded with his inspection. Suddenly it seemed as if cold hands were laid upon his heart, and for the first time in his uneventful life he knew real fear. He could feel the currents of horror running up and down his spine as plainly as the vibrations that travel over a violin string. He stood still. He heard some one cry in the rear part of the house. It came upon his consciousness suddenly and without warning and lasted but a moment, but in that moment it made so permanent an impression on his mind that he was never to forget it.

Without stopping to think, he ran to the head of the wide stairway, and, in a second or two, he had reached the kitchen. A thorough search revealed nothing. What happened, however, was the repetition of the cry—this time in the drawing-room. He was no coward, but he felt his hair rising in little waves of sensation, as though a cool wind had ruffled his head. He was uncertain for a moment, but, gathering himself together, he ran to the room in question, finding, of course, not a sign of the person who made the noise. Rapidly after this there followed a succession of the cries, each time in different parts of the house. The result was that, in a perfect torrent of fear, he ran out of the door, fumbling with the key, and left the place permanently behind him.

His story was received with gales of laughter by his wife. She made the remark that he had evidently been drinking, although she knew perfectly well that he never touched a drop. He became angry and went back again. Even our friend Kennedy would seem ridiculous if we were to describe his emotions as he reentered the Rawlinson home.

We are all of us living in a matter-of-fact world, and the spiritual sufferings of other people mean little to us unless they are personal in their reactions.

The unimaginative Kennedy was forced to admit that certain unexplored wells of feeling had been sought out and found. Almost ashamed, he went over the house from top to bottom, dreading each moment

the recurrence of that bloodcurdling cry, but never hearing it again. In fact, he was to know of it only once more and that at a time when even the impartial observer would have admitted its authenticity.

He said nothing of his experience outside of his first remarks to his wife. She consented to keep still in order that the servants whom they had hired might not become nervous and leave.

The return of Rawlinson was very quiet. He had visibly improved. Betty's mother greeted her effusively, frankly exhibiting pride in her daughter's excellent match. The fortunes of the Owens family were on the upward curve, she seemed to insinuate. To her social rivals this was poison. But we are not retailing the history of the social war in Edgeville. It came to an end so suddenly that such a history would appear ridiculous in the light of the events which followed the Rawlinson's honeymoon abroad.

Kennedy looked at him directly. He seemed to have lost his nervousness and appearance of being ill at ease. It was because of this that his friend said nothing of the mysterious adventures in his house. They shook hands quietly.

"By Jove, I believe I am actually glad to return to my home city!" Rawlinson said. "Betty and I had a glorious trip, but we admitted, time and again, that good old America was the place for us, eh, girlie?"

She smiled. "The best place on the globe. I don't think we will leave here again unless Albert gets restless."

"Well, we are mighty glad to welcome you back," Mrs. Kennedy broke in. "The old house seemed lonely and dark without your presence. I think you will find it cheery and hospitable now."

She gave her husband a sly smile, as though to poke fun at him for his experience there. He said nothing. He had had his first face-to-face encounter with the unseen, and he was not prepared to laugh it off as did his wife. However, he was determined not to say anything about it to Albert Rawlinson.

The Rawlinsons rapidly settled down into the well-ordered routine of their existence. They became the center of the social activities of the town. Mrs. Owens led her coterie with an iron hand. Albert Rawlinson had little to say as to this. It was obvious that he was madly in love with his wife, and she with him. They were together continuously. The most ordinary sight was their large racing car bowling down the countryside, Betty's laughing face beside the rather dark countenance of her husband. They loved speed. As they were well liked, they were not bothered.

It was soon after this that Kennedy again dropped into the habit of playing chess with his old friend once or twice a week in the library.

"Do you know," Rawlinson remarked on one of these evenings, "I believe that I will get rid of this Chinese junk and make the house over as an American house should be made. After all, I am an American, and I think I am going to forget my youth as much as I can."

Kennedy was forced to admit that he was glad. He confessed no particular admiration of the exotic, the weird Chinese things which his friend had collected. He was too provincial for that. He was not

even to be affected much by any adventure which might befall him. He was simply a normal, healthy person, content with his lot.

"That's fine," he answered. "I always thought the time would arrive when this foolishness would fall upon you."

"Don't call it exactly that," Rawlinson said. "I simply have come to realize that my Western blood is stronger than my Eastern education; that's all. They have a civilization over there that is not to be despised, let me tell you. I made some mistakes—one or two of large proportion—but since I found Betty I have learned that this life holds out more hopes of happiness than any other. I want to forget those lonely years, when I strove to get away from myself by exploring the mysteries of ancient faiths and civilizations. I went too deep ever to leave such things permanently behind me. At least I can save my children from this."

He laughed, and they went on with their game.

CHAPTER IV.

AN END TO ROMANCE.

ALMOST six months passed in this contented fashion. The Rawlinsons were the life of the town. They were hospitable and serene in their happiness. Rawlinson worshiped his wife with that amazing persistency which had driven him on in his work in Eastern philosophy. He never tired of purchasing lovely things for her to wear. He lived a life of but two desires—to make his wife happy and to make his estate something worthy for their children.

Slowly but surely he was eliminating the Chinese aspects from the house and grounds. It became noticeable finally. People remarked that he must have tired of his old life and was now anxious to live like an American.

Part of this was true. He was anxious to be an American in thought and feeling, but a large element of his desire to make over his place was the result of a stupendous fear. He dared not acknowledge it to himself. In fact, he had almost conquered it. The fear might have been of the unseen or the seen; this mattered little. He was most afraid of certain aspects of his life which no amount of struggle eliminated from his burning consciousness. He had gained certain truths abroad, but in that life he had lost many illusions, many dreams. He had tortured himself with study, with travel, with reading. He had reached the depths of Oriental mysticism. There was probably no man living who knew as much as he did about the dreams and aspirations of that distant country. The fact that he eventually gave up the idea of writing a book about it made little difference. The background was there, not to be eliminated. Certain enemies, certain facts clung around his heart. He knew that one particular act of his brought with it a responsibility that could not be ignored.

Strange to say, it was the patient, plodding Kennedy who ripped apart the closing chapters of Rawlinson's existence. It came about because of their interminable habit of meeting to enjoy a quiet game of chess.

Betty had prospered spiritually and blossomed into a most perfect example of womanhood. It was now that she was preparing a place in the world for their child. Often her husband came upon her unexpectedly to find her dreaming out of the window, her lovely hands at work upon some garment which she was making for the little one.

Kennedy parted from his wife one peaceful summer evening with no feeling of awe or expectancy. His placid children had retired, and he put on his hat, preparatory to his customary visit to his friend.

As he neared the Rawlinson house, he failed to notice that all the lights were out except one in the drawing-room. He strode up the roadway, whistling and thinking over his prosperity in worldly things.

On the porch, he stopped a moment. For the first time he realized that there was an air of peace, or rather gloom, around the house.

He rang the bell. There was no answer. He was surprised to find the door half open. Thinking that the servants might possibly have failed to hear him, and acting upon the privilege of a friend, he walked right in. No voice greeted an answer to his friendly "Halloo."

This was most unusual. Ordinarily he was greeted with visible protestations of joy. Albert habitually stood in the drawing-room doorway and extended a hand of welcome. But to-night there was no Rawlinson, no servant. He called again. No reply. Now thoroughly aroused, he strode into the room at his right. The lamp from the drawing-room shone through the open doors, casting a glow around the walls.

Half conscious of icy hands at his heart, Kennedy found himself in the lighted chamber, and came face to face with the speaking thing that had driven Rawlinson to gray hairs before his time. Sitting in an easy-chair, he found Betty, her head bowed low and a Chinese sword driven straight through her body with such force that the point stuck out at her back below the shoulder blade. A powerful hand had wielded the weapon. There could be no doubt of that. Betty still clutched a tiny dress which her dead hands had left uncompleted. This, strangely enough, was the first object that Kennedy saw. He found himself standing there, his hat on, his cane in his hands, and, it seemed, torrents of cold water rushing through his veins. He was chilled to the bone. Trembling in every limb, he finally dared to approach the body of Betty Rawlinson.

As he reached over to touch the hilt of the sword, he again heard that terrible shriek. It seemed to come out of the darkness like a flash of lightning. Almost falling, Kennedy clutched the edge of the table. The business was too much for his mind. He couldn't grasp the significance of such titanic events. The shriek completely unnerved him. He rushed back to the front room. For the first time he noticed that the large canvas, which Rawlinson used to exhibit proudly to his friends, was pushed back. He looked closely at it, hardly conscious of what he was doing, and still throbbing with the vision of the dead woman. What was his surprise when he saw that the canvas was ripped open as though a man had jumped through

it. He found, after examining it that a flight of stairs led below.

He could never explain it afterward, but he lit a match and found himself in a low corridor which he followed until he came out into the garden pergola which Rawlinson always kept locked. By this time Kennedy was nearly insane. He called a passing friend, and together they roused the neighborhood. It was discovered that the servants had been murdered, too. Their bodies were found in the kitchen.

CHAPTER V.

THE CLOAK.

RAWLINSON had entirely disappeared. The murders remained unsolved. The coroner's jury found him guilty of being the perpetrator of the crimes, and a countrywide search was instituted. Edgeville became the center of the world for a few weeks, but when no trace was discovered of the man it simmered down, as all such things do, and only the immediate witnesses remembered. Not the least of these was the completely changed Kennedy. His wife finally had to confess that the shriek he heard that day was not purely imagination. Together they closed the house.

However, Fate had not finished with the placid Kennedy. It was determined to make him go on with the affair to the bitter end. Out of the clear sky came a letter. It read:

DEAR KENNEDY: You are evidently in this business to the finish. It is best so. If our friendship means anything, I wish you would attend my funeral the day after to-morrow. It will be held in The Street Without a Name, Chinatown, New York. This is my last message except a precious document which you will find in my coffin. See the police when you reach New York and be on this street at eleven a. m. Take charge of my coffin. I leave my property to you. Good-by, dear friend. Remember the happiness of a man is measured by what he gives the world. I have been a thief of emotions. I have paid the just debt of an outcast of feeling. The solution of this rests with you. Sincerely,

ALBERT RAWLINSON.

To say that the world tumbled about Kennedy's ears with the first perusal of this note would be putting insanity into third-reader English. The man was made over. His wife found him in the study, paralyzed in thought, his patient hands twitching nervously, his face white as a piece of letter paper.

"My dear," she cried, "are you ill?"

His answer was to hand her the note. He did not even glance up to trace out the emotions in her kindly countenance. His lack of imagination refused to cope with so huge a problem. Tragedy had come into his life and it had found him wanting. One might say that Fate was jesting when it picked out Kennedy from millions of others to attend Albert Rawlinson's funeral upon the man's own personal invitation.

"What are you going to do?" Mrs. Kennedy found her voice after a struggle.

Her husband looked up at her like a sheep before being killed.

"What can I do?" he whispered huskily.

"You can go," she answered, laying the note in his trembling hands and steadying herself against the library table.

This thought seemed to surprise them both.

"Why—of course—I must go," he stuttered. "It's the least I can do for him, I guess."

Who shall say that Rawlinson did not pick his friends with fine taste? A man or woman possessing vivacity or will power of marked degree would have immediately hit upon some method to save him. The Kennedys did nothing of the sort. They busied themselves with the preparations for the journey, and in a few hours the country lawyer was on his way to New York, after saying a long farewell and receiving a thousand cautions of one sort or another.

No committee of welcome awaited him at the Pennsylvania Station. Not one in the vast crowd would have suspected that the fussy little side-whiskered gentleman in tweeds was the immediate instrument of a Fate with a sense of humor. He passed hurriedly through the crowd, and in the safe guardianship of a taxi was carried to a well-known hotel where he might prepare himself for the coming task. It took but a short while to locate police headquarters, and an appointment was made for the following morning. Kennedy did not get a minute's sleep that night.

The police official to whom Kennedy told his story was startled out of his usual calm. The note received its merited study, and the result was an automobile filled with quiet-looking men rushing toward Chinatown at much beyond the speed limit.

"Why didn't you come last night?" Kennedy was asked.

This seemed to surprise him.

"The note directed differently," he replied.

"Bother the note!" the gruff officer bellowed above the roar of the car. "You might have saved your friend had you possessed an ounce of initiative."

"But you didn't know him," Kennedy broke in. "He placed this trust in me, and I don't see any reason for my failing that trust."

"I suppose you know that he was wanted for murder." The officer said this with infinite sarcasm and as though he were talking to a child.

"I did, but I know that Albert Rawlinson was no murderer. He loved his wife. There is something more than that in this terrible affair. If any one is to blame, it is that Chinese servant, Wang Soo."

They reached Chinatown after twisting here and there through the traffic and missing many accidents by only a hair's breadth. The Street Without a Name was known to the police. It had received this curious title through the fact that a certain society of Chinamen had once lived there and one dark night had disappeared—all of them. The house which they had inhabited fell into decay, and, strangely enough, all that remained over the doorway was an inscription which, when translated, read: "The House Without a Name." Thus the street of two blocks which ran in front of it came by its title.

On this particular morning it was crowded throughout its full length. Some ceremony was going on. The nature of it was discovered when Kennedy and the police alighted from the car and mixed in with the crowd of Orientals and curiosity seekers.

"It's a funeral all right," the leader of the police remarked. "You can hear them beating their drums to keep the devil away."

Kennedy felt a thrill run up his spine. His friend's

funeral. There was no need to certify this fact in his mind.

The police hurried through the densely packed throng and came out into a cleared space at the head of the procession. It took but a few moments to complete their work. They halted the entire business there and then. With peremptory orders they assumed charge of the coffin. For a few seconds it looked like trouble. Reserves came up in answer to the leader's whistle. A few moments later there wasn't an Oriental on the entire street. It seemed as though they had one and all vanished into thin air. They left the box containing the dead just where they had originally placed it. The white-robed mourners seemed to have forgotten their duty as well as the others. A few were under arrest, but further investigation proved nothing whatsoever. With desecrating hands the police opened the box. They found nothing but a long, dark cloak.

"That's his," Kennedy breathlessly chimed in. "He often wore it while driving his car."

"It's a blamed funny business, that's all I've got to say," one of the policemen declared. "Buryin' a cloak. Well, you can't trust these chinks anyhow."

Kennedy took the cloak in his hands with a trembling heart. Somehow the mere touching of the garment brought back all the odd qualities of his friend. He fumbled through the folds, half suspecting the concealment of some message. He did not anticipate such a generous reward of his wishes. Concealed in a pocket were a number of closely written pages in the handwriting of Rawlinson. The document had evidently escaped the eyes of the zealous Celestials who had decreed his death. The police took charge of the paper at once in spite of Kennedy's protests. He was later granted permission to read the thing from beginning to end.

With the discovery of the cloak and the papers, and the lack of any further information, Kennedy passes out of the history of this curious case. Word has come that he continues his usual existence in Edgeville, but he has, to date, refused to assume any personal interest in the Rawlinson home. It is for sale.

CHAPTER VI.

RAWLINSON'S NARRATIVE.

THE following statement by Rawlinson is preserved as a precious document in the files of the police department. It may throw some light on the frequent disappearances in Chinatown, the solutions of which remain impenetrable mysteries.

"I know that what I have to say herein will receive little faith in so material a world, but I would give all the wealth I possess were the slightest part of this confession untrue. Now that I await death before the Hidden Council, I shall take my last opportunity to warn others against my transgressions, hoping that a kind Fate will permit these pages to see the light of day. I am going to secrete them in my cloak, and if I suffer the death usually allotted to my kind by the Hidden Council, this cloak will not be touched, but buried in place of my body, which at that time will have dissolved into integral parts of the universe. I know that this will be. Who would dare lay hands upon the cloak

of an evil spirit? Most of all an Oriental? Yet upon this superstition I must depend in order that my wrong shall reach the outside world to serve as an example to those who have the effrontery to explore the ancient secrets of the East or who dare to transgress upon the rights of a peace-loving people. Let the Westerner beware. He can never appreciate the subtleties of that world. His very nature is fundamentally opposed to that conception of life which admits that personalities are worthless. The greatest we have to offer in philosophy seems to me now only a doormat before the illimitable spaces of that Eastern temple of faith, where, as a boy, I was first initiated into its simplest truths.

"To the Western mind I give warning. Thousands of years stretch before you ere you will have gained the plane of thought experienced by those impassive priests. Let this story stand as an example of how one Westerner sought to set aside their eternal laws by placing a supervalue upon his personality. Take heed, all that scan these spirit-scarred leaves. This is the chronicle of a lost soul. I blame only myself. I shall mention no names. I am the indirect cause of my beloved wife's death—the thought of which gathers in my throat like a fog—and I shall pass into the endless dimensions of eternity knowing that my punishment is well deserved. I would not wish it otherwise.

"As a boy of ten I was literally dragged by a curious father to the Orient. I have few memories of my boyhood in Edgeville beyond the kindness of my friend Kennedy—dear old Kennedy!—who rushed to my protection once or twice. However, in the Far East I was put to school under the rigorous tutelage of priests. My father went deeper and deeper into the mysteries of that glittering faith until he had literally turned into an Oriental himself, his features suggesting his mind, his speech becoming almost that of his new country.

"To an impressionistic boy, this state of affairs could not exist very long without having its effect. Added to my father's fiery impetuosity were the words of the Chinese philosophers who almost lived with us. I sat at their feet, listening to their stories, from early morning until late at night. The deeper my father went, the more surrounded I became by all the arts of that ancient world. This condition of affairs became so intense that my father was finally admitted to the highest caste of the country—forsaking his citizenship—burning his bridges behind him. He wore a robe reaching from neck to ankles, concealing a loose vest and trousers which, among the better classes, are incased in garters of material suitable to their rank and high estate. He sank into the new life with all that fervor of soul which, had Fate permitted it, would have made him an honored and respected citizen in his own home.

"Time grows short. I must hasten my narrative. They are preparing for the hour now. I hear them without my room, moving hither and thither in the great council chamber. Who would believe that this could happen in the very heart of New York City? The arm of that ancient faith is a long one. It has reached out of the darkness and found me. The hands are at my throat!

"As a boy of eighteen, my father selected a bride

for me among his adopted race. I had no choice in the matter. According to the rites of that religion we were joined in the holy bonds of matrimony. She was a delicate child—only sixteen. I had no particular aversion to her. I did not care for her, that was all. But from then on I wore the robes of my caste—the metal button on the official cap. I had the famous ruby in the crown of the cap, the crane embroidered on breast and back of my robes, the girdle fastened with jade clasp set in rubies. My little wife, Lei, had the official attire of a wife of one in the hidden circles of power. It consisted of a loose tunic reaching to the knees, buttoning at the neck and under the right arm. The trousers were of a fabulous material. Her hair was arranged high upon her head and decorated with jeweled hairpins. Shall I ever forget the wedding ceremony? And then the long days that followed, during which the conviction grew in my mind that the life I was leading was not natural. I could never care for it. Poor Lei! She understood. Her brother, Air Yōng Tai, suspected also. It would be useless here to describe my conflicting emotions during those years.

"Father became more and more immersed in his thoughts. He forgot I was living. We had separate homes. I do not recall how I first learned it, but knowledge was brought to me that he was leading a spiritual revolt in the faith which he had assumed. This was dangerous. I warned him. I told him of other foolish white men who had attempted the same thing and who had come to sudden and violent ends. What good did it do? He ordered me from the house. The next I knew he had been found murdered in his library, the unknown assassin escaping and leaving no trace. With this as a culmination to a long series of hated occurrences I flew into a violent rage, determined to leave the country, and after a pitiful scene with little Lei I escaped one night. She refused to accompany me. I learned later that she was married to a prince of the faith after certain separation ceremonies had been accomplished which forever alienated her from me. This was good. I also have heard from reliable sources that she is happy and has now realized her ambition with children.

"Her brother never forgave. He pursued me to the very port of Hongkong. There I managed to slip aboard a steamer, after hairbreadth escapes that would startle the soul out of its accustomed lethargy. I was a changed man from that day forth. Air Yōng Tai knew that I possessed secrets that must die with me, and so they shall. He sent his servant to seek employment under me. In that I made the mistake of my life, yet shall I have regrets at this ominous hour? I have no rancor. The brother is without my door at this moment. He is superintending the ceremonies that will attend the final chapter in my strange career.

"When these hurried lines are finished I shall conceal them in my cloak. If I do not misjudge, it will be found in my coffin. I have reached Kennedy. I did this just before I entered the Council House, because I knew then that there was no hope of escaping my doom. I could not break out. I decided to stand trial. Shall I describe the long, tedious examination? It would be useless here. I am writing only to warn

others against entering these mysteries which are hard for the Western mind to comprehend.

"I cannot find words to speak of my poor wife at this time. It is cruel that she should have had to suffer because of me. This was the very refinement of their fiendishness. They know it. They trade upon it. I tried to guard against the danger by digging a tunnel from my house out into the garden, constructing an exit in a pergola which I always kept locked. I really thought I was clever. Little did I know how intense, how far-reaching was the power which, as a boy, I had known dimly. They discovered the whole thing. Instead of proving a means of escape when the attack came, it was used by them to enter my home. I came in—I saw her sitting there dead. What could I do?

"I have been forced to stop. They have informed me now that I have not long. I must prepare myself I am dressed in the official robes of death. I know what it will be. I shall disappear before their eyes—fade into the ether of nothingness. They have known for centuries that the human body can be dissolved into many dimensions unseen by the human eye. At a word, a swift wind will enter that council chamber lifting my hair by the roots. Instantly I shall feel icy hands at my throat. Darkness will pour around me like a muddy fluid. I shall gasp for air. I shall see their faces become elongated, attenuated, gray, and more evil. In that moment I shall gather my fading will power together and rush for the hideous, leering Air Yōng Tai. If I can reach him before I disappear from earth and lay my hands upon him he, too, shall die, for it is decreed that whosoever touches the condemned in the execution shall also perish.

"My cloak will remain on the floor in a crumpled heap. After my going, it will be lifted with golden tongs and borne into the central hall, where it will gently be laid on a bed of boards. At this moment their fiendish priests will surround me, calling upon one of the *Three Spirits* which are known to inhabit every man, to hasten my exit into those dark-filled regions of the West. When this ceremony is completed, there will be no chief mourner, helped by friends as is the usual custom in these funerals, and who goes to the nearest river to 'buy water' to bathe the features of the dead.

"The coffin will be a massive structure because, after all, I was of the highest caste, adopted though I may have been. It will consist of four boards from three to four inches thick, of a hard and durable wood. In this my cloak will be laid on a bed of charcoal and the cover sealed. The procession will form at this led by a man carrying a long streamer of black cloth. Following him will be two men bearing huge banners. Thus shall I go to my tomb. They will dispense with the sedan chairs bearing a tablet and a portrait. No mourners shall weep for me; no paper money be scattered on all sides. None of these honors shall be allotted my spirit. The priest who bears the white rooster will be absent also, and that strange ceremony when he makes it bow toward the coffin three times, as it is lowered into the earth, will have to be omitted.

"They are coming now. It is the end. I have no fear. Again I bless the memory of my beloved wife and pray forgiveness."

The Fatal Chord

By Harry C. Douglas



HAD I not learned in an eventful life spent in the odd holes and corners of the earth that nothing is impossible I should have laughed at my host's story. But as it was it interested me vastly by its weird suggestion.

It was in October of 1913 that Professor Hector Thorne, of New York, and I found ourselves in London with two weeks on our hands before the steamer in which we had taken passage was due to start for America. London, at that time of the year, is empty. We had long ago seen the sights, and the time seemed likely to hang heavily on our hands. We suddenly remembered a standing invitation from a man named Charles Overman, who had a fine country place in the Midlands, and whom we had met from time to time on the Continent and in England. In three days we had joined the jolly stag-house party Overman was entertaining. Thoroughgoing cosmopolitan man of the world as he was, he proved an excellent host, and gave us fine shooting over the stubble.

It was the custom for the men to gather in his cozy little den for a good-night whisky and soda, a last cigar and an exchange of yarns before bedtime. That was how we heard the story. The talk, starting from a desultory discussion on various happenings outside ordinary experience, took a more serious turn. Our host left the room for a moment, to return with a fine old violin. Leaning against the mantel, he faced us as we lounged in the easy-chairs with which the den was littered.

"Talking of things happening for which there seems no ordinary explanation," Overman began in the reminiscent manner of a man with a yarn to spin, "this violin, if the story I was told about it is only half true, has played a strange—and ghastly—part."

We settled down to listen with pleasurable interest—all but one of us. This was Philip Holmden, a slim, pale-faced young fellow from London, whose reputation as a submarine expert and inventor was known to us all. As Overman unfolded his weird tale, Holmden, I thought at the time, seemed strangely affected.

"Well, then," our host went on in response to a general request for the story, "I bought this violin in Paris chiefly because of its history. Sometimes I wonder if I didn't do a very foolish thing, but the story seemed so impossible that I got it, I suppose, out of much the same spirit that impels men to sit down thirteen at a table, spill salt, walk under ladders, and do all the other things that superstition warns

us against. Briefly, the story goes that this instrument at times gives off from its strings music in the night. Whoever hears it dies soon after."

In dead silence he walked over to the table and laid the violin down upon it. There was not a sound except the crackling of the logs burning on the open hearth as he went back to the mantel and resumed:

"Over two hundred years ago it belonged to a chap, Guido Bruneschi, a Florentine, who, like his townsman Dante in a former age, loved in vain. Bruneschi betook himself,

his unrequited affection, and his violin to a hermit's cell. He had been passionately devoted to the instrument in happier days, and in his retirement was no less so. Only now he played nothing but the most doleful music. The *contadini* used to gather near his cell at night to listen; they told each other he was playing to his lost love and life. Then the violin was heard no more. Bruneschi was found in his cell, dead, clutching his beloved instrument to his breast."

We looked at the thing as it lay on the table with new interest. This story from another age gripped us.

"His brother took it and kept it as a souvenir. Some years later he told his family that he had heard the strings of the violin throbbing in the night, giving off the same wild, wailing notes that his dead brother had coaxed from it long before. Three days after that he, too, was found dead—with nothing to show why."

There was silence. The wind sighed mournfully outside. The fire crackled noisily. Holmden was paler than ever. One of the men, relighting his cigar and throwing the match into the fire, said with an assumption of lightness: "Might have been killed by one of the poisons those old johnnies were so clever with—sort of Borgia business, you know."

"I don't know," Overman went on. "Anyhow, the violin continued its unpleasant habit at more or less irregular intervals right down to a few years ago, when a well-known Spanish musician got it. He knew the story, but laughed at it, and the instrument is a really splendid one. He played it in all the capitals of Europe. One night as he was leaving the Albert Hall in London a woman pushed up to him and threw vitriol in his face. It turned out to be some

one with whom he'd had an affair long before; he'd treated her rather badly, I believe. Not long after he committed suicide, but before that he told his doctor that he knew something was going to happen to him, because two or three days before the vitriol episode he'd heard the violin in the night.

"The thing was put up for sale at Christie's and knocked down to a Russian nobleman, who was assassinated a few months later. One of his servants told the police that a few days before his murder his master had asked him if he had heard what seemed to be strains of music in the night. And those are the main points in the violin's history down to now. Perhaps I was a fool to buy it, but nothing has happened to me yet, and I'm not letting it worry me at all," concluded Overman with a careless gesture as he went over and took a cigarette from the box on the table.

Incredulous though they might be, the men were obviously affected by the wild tale, and every one seemed relieved when the talk shifted to the morrow's shooting. We were to visit a preserve not yet shot over from which much was hoped. Soon afterward, saying our good nights, we went upstairs to our several rooms.

My chamber was next to Holmden's, and we strolled down the corridor together. At his door, with his hand on the knob, he turned to me, remarking: "That was a singularly uncanny yarn, wasn't it?"

"It certainly was," I agreed, wondering at the distressing effect it had produced upon him.

"I noticed you didn't seem as incredulous as the rest."

"I've learned to believe—and disbelieve—nothing idly," I told him.

"You don't mean you swallow such stuff."

He seemed making an almost despairing attempt to get my denial, but I merely quoted platonically: "There are more things in heaven and earth—, You know the rest," and bade him good night.

I rested badly. For some time I couldn't get to sleep at all, and when at last I did drop off it was only to dream—but what a dream! It was like no other dream or nightmare I remembered. It's outlines had none of the usual blurred indistinctness. On the contrary, it was remarkably clear cut. Never till my dying day shall I forget that dream and what followed.

I saw two shapes. One—that of a woman—always fled before another, a cloaked, hooded figure that persistently followed her. At last, exhausted, she turned at bay. The pursuer stopped. Cloak and hood fell open. I saw a pale, melancholy face. In one hand the male figure had a violin which had been hidden beneath the cloak; now he started to play. Just as the first wailing chords were coaxed from the strings I awoke in a cold sweat. A muffled shriek seemed ringing in my ears; but, sitting bolt upright in bed, I could hear nothing but the wind, rising and falling round the house like the restless billows of an ocean of sound. "Confound Overman and his rotten yarn!" I apostrophized.

I could almost have believed that it was *real* music, a *real* scream, that had assailed my startled ears at the very moment of waking; but I threw off the thought. I listened intently. Perfect stillness en-

wrapped the house. The wind had died down. There was not a sound. Still I could not rest, and, getting up, I switched on the light and smoked away furiously over a novel till at last I felt myself drowsing. That novel would have sent an insomniac to sleep.

II.

NEXT morning both Holmden and my friend Thorne were absent from breakfast. There was nothing particularly strange about that, for the house was Liberty Hall and the men dropped down whenever and however they chose. Thorne, indeed, was an incorrigible late riser, who, moreover, was not so keen about shooting as the rest of us. But Holmden was a great sportsman, despite his scholarly appearance, and was not at all likely to be late on a morning when the guns were to leave the house early.

"I suppose the professor is not going to-day," my host said to me as the men lounged about with their letters and matutinal cigarettes till the wagonette drove round. "It's funny Holmden's not down, though. Wonder if he's going."

"I can't say. Perhaps your yarn last night upset him and spoiled his sleep."

With a keen glance at me, Overman left the room.

I was in the hall, looking over my gun, when he came downstairs. From his face I knew at once that something serious had happened. With an apprehensive glance toward the door of the breakfast room, from which came the sound of merry chatter, he said agitatedly: "He's dead!"

"What?"

"Yes, dead; dead. This is a terrible affair, Dixon. You've seen a good deal, I know. Will you come upstairs with me?"

Without replying I nodded, a mad whirl of thoughts, of half-formed, vague impressions rioting through my brain. I followed him.

His dark eyes were unnaturally bright as he turned to me with his hand on the knob of Holmden's room, just as Holmden himself had stood the night before. "It's—he's—not pretty."

I merely signed to him to go in, and we entered, Overman closing the door behind us with that softness which Death commands in all approaching his dread presence.

Holmden lay half out of the bedclothes in a crouching posture, as if he had started up and then fallen back sideways. There was no sign of disorder anywhere in the room. His clothes were folded neatly on a chair. His grips seemed untouched. His things were set out on the dressing table in orderly array.

What could have come into that most ordinary, peaceful-looking room to have frozen that expression of horror on the dead face? I asked myself. Terror—mad, unreasoning, panic-stricken terror—was written indelibly in the wide, staring eyes. Then a thought struck me, a thought astounding, numbing in its weird suggestion:

The cry that had rung in my ears as I awoke from that strange dream. The wailing strain of music I seemed to hear. What of them?

Something like a cold hand clutched at my heart. Things not of our warm, pulsating, everyday life

pressed in upon us—seemed hovering in the still air of that chamber.

Overman was standing near the window, watching me intently.

"To me this man has all the appearance of having died of sheer terror," I said in answer to the unspoken question in my host's eyes.

"You heard nothing—your room is next door, you know."

For a moment I hesitated. It seemed the height of absurdity to tell this experienced cosmopolitan that I had awakened from sleep with what might have been the mingling of a strain of music with a shriek ringing in my ears. And yet there lay Holmden—dead, with that dread unutterability in his eyes.

"I heard no disturbance of any kind, if that is what you mean," I compromised.

He pressed me, quick to scent that I was reserving something.

"Then you did hear something?"

I could keep back what I thought no longer then, though I told him nothing of the dream.

"My God! I wonder—but it can't be—it's impossible," he muttered vehemently, a strange look on his face.

Glancing significantly at the still form on the bed, I shrugged my shoulders. Then the utter incongruity of the thing struck me. From below came the cheery voices of healthy men—typically modern, easy-going men of the world. Outside the peaceful English landscape lay in the soft haze of a perfect October morning. The wheels of the prosaic wagonette which was to have taken us to the shoot grated on the gravel drive beneath the window. And there lay one of our number, hurried out of life, it seemed, by some agency not of the world we knew at all. It was as if a dead hand, stretching out from the Italy of long ago, had struck in among us and our commonplace, workaday existence.

"Of course we can't say anything about what you heard—and what we both think," Overman said after a long pause. "We should be worried senselessly by morbid sensation mongers, with and without cameras, and laughed to scorn as superstitious idiots by the general public if a hint of such a thing got abroad. Of course there will have to be a doctor, an inquest, and all the rest of it. I must go down and tell the men now. But have I your promise to say nothing about the—er—more bizarre and inexplicable features of this terrible affair, Dixon?"

I quite sympathized with his desire to avoid sensational publicity, though I felt that, in common justice to the dead, some inquiry should be made, some inquiry which should take into account our nebulous ideas on the matter. Although on the surface Holmden's death might appear due to heart failure or some other seizure, Overman and I, it seemed to me, vaguely surmised other causes so apparently wild and improbable that we were reluctant to say what we thought even to each other.

Then I made up my mind. "I promise—if you'll agree to one thing."

"And that is?"

"That you allow Professor Thorne to investigate this most queer affair. He has, as I believe you are aware, devoted years of his life to studies of things

off the beaten track of ordinary scientific research. It is a thousand to one that we are making a mountain out of a molehill, but I feel that we owe it to poor Holmden to make at least that effort to clear up any mystery surrounding his death—if mystery there is."

Overman looked at me sharply, then turned away and stared through the window for a few moments before replying. "All right," he said at last decisively as he started to move toward the door. "I shall be glad for the professor to make any inquiries he likes."

And we left the room together.

III.

THORNE gladly undertook the investigation, which was indeed after his own heart. As the author of "Phenomenon of Poltergeist," "Origins of Animism," "Legends of the Loup-Garou," his reputation had extended far beyond his native America among savants and others interested in psychic research and scientific inquiry into fragments of supernatural beliefs and folklore still passionately clung to in many parts of Europe. In the United States he was regarded as the authority on all matters falling within his chosen field. Tall and thin, with a slight, scholarly stoop, he carried his head thrust forward a little, which to me always suggested his mental attitude of restless probing to drag the kernel of truth from its shell of nonessentials. Beneath the forehead and eyes of a poet and dreamer were the thought-lined cheeks, the thin-lipped, incisive mouth of the scientist. He had lived much in the open among primitive peoples, and the lower part of his face was a pale, washed-out-looking brown with which the whiteness of his high forehead was in strong contrast when one saw him with his hat off.

His indolent manner of the last few days dropped from him. Again he was the keen, efficient mental machine I loved to watch at work. He lost no time, but overhauled the room of the tragedy and indeed the entire premises—inside and out—while Overman was informing his guests, who departed with many expressions of condolence, arranging for the removal of the body, and so on. The local doctor, hastily summoned, had proclaimed death as due to heart failure. I did not doubt that this was so—but what had caused it? I thought I knew.

Thorne toyed absently with his lunch. Had his wonderful acumen already hit upon some clew? I asked myself as I watched him. We took the meal alone, our host having too much to attend to to be with us. As we rose from the table I asked:

"Is there anything I can do—anything I can take off your hands?"

"Yes," he replied after a moment's hesitancy. "Stay in and about your room as much as you can. I have to go into the county town this afternoon and I should like to know that a trusty eye was being kept on Holmden's room."

"You have discovered something?" I pressed eagerly.

Smiling rather grimly, he held up a deprecatory hand. "Perhaps I have; but I cannot be quite certain yet. I have sent a wire to a young friend of mine—one of the keenest American press correspondents

in London. A lot will depend on the answer to that. I expect the answer this afternoon. I have had it addressed to me in care of the office of the superintendent of police. That is one reason I have to go into town. But you must contrive to be in and out of your room while I'm away, so that nothing goes on in that room next door that you don't know about. Moreover, let it be known that you are hanging about. You can easily find an excuse—reading, writing, fussing with your grips—anything."

I would have sought more details, but I knew the uselessness of it. Till he was certain of his ground he would disclose nothing.

Seething with suppressed excitement, I obeyed. The drowsy hours of the warm autumn afternoon passed all too slowly. Once the quiet of the corridor was disturbed when Holmden's body was removed for the post-mortem. After that whenever I heard a footstep outside I came out of my room with a book, coughed as I sat upon, rustled papers, or took some other means of letting it be known that I was inside. Also I left my door ajar. Whatever Thorne's reasons were for his request I intended to obey him to the letter. It should be no fault of mine if his plans miscarried.

I read success in his face when he returned early in the evening, but he made no confidence.

"Plead indisposition directly dinner is over and go to your room," was all he vouchsafed. "Be ready for me later to-night. Before morning I hope to have the entire affair wound up."

At dinner he was brilliant. When he chose he was a clever talker, a most delightful raconteur, and to-night he positively scintillated. "Did you ever read Thomson's 'Castle of Indolence?'" he asked suddenly, turning to me.

"You should," he replied in answer to my negative; "it's well worth it." Then he ran on to relate some of his strange experiences in the recesses of Lithuania.

I was puzzled. His question had been so sudden; there had been nothing to lead up to it, and it was boldly dismissed after having been deliberately introduced. Some hidden significance lay behind the apparently aimless remark, I was sure.

No sooner was the meal over than, in obedience to his desire, I asked to be excused, pleading slight indisposition. Overman gave me a sharp look, and then expressed his wish that it was nothing serious and that I might be all right by morning.

"I'm sure I shall," I told him and went upstairs.

Again that weary waiting, while I wondered what was to happen, turning the problem over in my mind, but finding no satisfactory solution, try as I would. Ten, eleven o'clock chimed. And then, close upon midnight, I thought I heard a low whistle outside, but as it was not repeated I thought I must be mistaken. A little after midnight I heard a soft scratching on my door. It was the signal Thorne had chosen to announce his coming.

Breathlessly I rose, noiselessly crossed the floor, and admitted him. He locked the door behind him. "Don't make a light," came his whispered warning in the gloom as we stood close together, seeing nothing but the vague outlines of our forms.

"Now listen. I think I have arranged to bring this

affair to a head to-night. If I'm right I shall get my answer in the next room—Holmden's. I may need help; there will probably be danger. Are you willing to see it through with me?"

"Of course," I answered, my heart beating faster.

"Have you a revolver with you?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Too bad. But I've got my cane here; it's a pretty heavy malacca. For the rest we'll have to rely on our quickness and strength. And I've got help handy."

"But what—"

Reaching out in the darkness, he laid a restraining hand on my lips as he whispered: "You must leave it to me for the present. Questions aren't in order just now. You'll soon know everything. Well, if you're ready we'll go now."

We stole out into the dimly lit corridor. Turning the key in the outside lock of my door, he drew it out and we entered the next room. What on earth had my friend to do in the dead of night in that chamber in which Holmden had passed, I wondered.

It was an uncanny experience. The empty bed on which the body had lain gleamed whitely in the gloom. Thorne went over to the window and peered through it. To my excited imagination the air seemed peopled with invisible thronging presences. Thorne's motive, whatever it was, enjoined the strictest secrecy and caution upon us. We dared not make a light. He forbade smoking. All we could do was to wait in darkness and silence—wait for I knew not what.

Somewhere in the house, heavy with brooding stillness, a clock struck one, then two. We had scarcely moved. I was not tired. The air was too full of tense expectancy for that; I knew that something must happen soon. Then the wind began to rise, till presently it was moaning round the house as it had the night before. Thorne stooped down, busy with something beneath the low window sill. Then he straightened up, and against the dim light I saw silhouetted what he held; it was like a rod or stick three or four feet long. Stealing across the floor, he laid this gently on the bed. Then my heart leaped into my throat.

Under the bottom of the door a faint yellow crack showed, which momentarily grew wider; then other yellow lines showed along the top and down the sides of the door. Some one was softly pushing it open!

Instinctively we both assumed a crouching posture, our eyes glued upon those ever-widening shafts of light. A dark figure stole in, a foot at a time, closing the door soundlessly behind it.

The incidents of the next few breathless seconds will ever remain in my memory blurred, indistinct. Thorne's tall, lean form glided across the floor, swiftly and noiselessly as some nocturnal beast of prey. The figure at the door had its back to us as it locked the door on the inside. Thorne's long arms were outstretched to grip the intruder by the throat when that happened which threw me into such a wild turmoil that, as I have said, everything is imprinted upon my memory with impressionistic power, but also with impressionistic lack of detail.

Just as I had heard it the night before in the moment between dream and awakening came that sobbing, wailing burst of unearthly music!

It seemed to fill the silent room with waves of

sound. It rose in harsh discord, to die away in a refrain ineffably low, sweet, and tender. My blood ran cold in my veins. My heart seemed to stop. What could it mean? Then, in a flash, the thought raced through my brain:

"The death warning!"

Who was to be its victim this time?

Just then the dark figure at the door turned; turned to see the tall, menacing form stealing upon it. A quick movement. My friend reeled back across the floor with a gasp of pain, and doubled over like a half-opened jackknife. Then the spell that was upon me broke.

I hurled myself upon the intruder, the man who, for all I knew, had just done my friend and countryman to death. We grappled, and in that moment I realized I would have to put forth every ounce of strength in me, use every trick of wrestling I had ever learned, if I were to save myself. The half Nelson, arm locks, leg locks—these and a score of others he tried on me one after another with bewildering rapidity. Time after time I just managed to save myself by a hair's breadth. He was trying to do more than merely throw me; I soon found he was burning with savage determination to crush or rend the life out of me.

We fell to the floor together at last with a dull thud, he uppermost. His long, powerful fingers were round my throat, strangling me, choking me slowly but surely to death. In my failing senses again sounded that burst of music. Then a low whistle at the window.

Gathering my vanishing powers, I made one last effort. With a rapid, writhing motion, a knee and arm thrust out and up with desperate force, a poise of half a second, and then a heave that took the last ounce I had, I turned the tables and held him underneath me. And just then something struck me an agonizing blow at the back of the head. A thousand lights danced before my eyes. I fell across the body beneath me and knew no more.

IV.

I RETURNED to consciousness to find Thorne bending over me, flask in hand. Without a word he helped me to my feet. I staggered over to the bed and sat heavily down, leaning against the rail at its foot. Another drink from his flask and I was able to sit upright. My head ached abominably, but I was rapidly regaining control of my strength and faculties. The light was on now. The door was shut. I looked eagerly around; we were alone. What had become of my late antagonist? I turned to Thorne to ask, but, seeing I was better, he had shifted his attention to the door, which he watched intently, gripping his heavy cane.

"Here; take this and drink some more." Flinging the flask on the bed, he gave me a swift glance over his shoulder. "If things have miscarried we may have to fight for our lives in a few moments. Ah—"

He broke off as a crash sounded on the door. Drawing a whistle from his pocket, he blew three shrill blasts, answered immediately from outside.

Already one panel of the door was smashed in when I heard a loud noise below. Then many feet

drumming on the stairs. A loud cry of alarm outside our door. Whoever were trying to smash their way to us dropped their weapons and fled down the corridor. Thorne sprang to the door and flung it open. A figure in dark blue stopped for a moment, and then raced on down the corridor, followed by five or six similar figures, as my friend cried pointing in the direction our late enemies had taken:

"Quick! That way!"

Then to me: "Just a minute, Dixon; I must get the servants quieted and back to bed. I want no panic."

By the time he returned I was half crazed with excitement and curiosity; so much so that I quite forgot my head, which really must have still been aching madly.

"What in Heaven's name is it all about?" I cried. "You must tell me. I've waited long enough surely."

"All right," he began; "we've some time to ourselves now, I imagine, for I hear the police outside again. Their men must have got out of the house and broken through the cordon. There are very special reasons why the police won't use any weapons on them if they can help it, but they'll get them before long. The whole county force is fairly humming now."

Sinking into a low chair opposite where I sat on the bed, he crossed his hands over the gnarled head of his cane and leaned his chin upon them as he told his story quietly and without any show of triumph or particular elation at the wonderful success that had crowned his rapid, flawless thinking in this case that seemed so utterly bewildering.

"I started by asking if it were possible that Holmden's death had been deliberately induced. He was one of England's cleverest young naval inventors, who had devoted himself almost exclusively to submarine and torpedo improvements. You and I have just returned from the Continent. You know our opinion of the present state of affairs in Germany?"

"Surely," I agreed. "Germany is working night and day on the greatest war machine the world ever saw. What's more, she means to use that machine the minute it is perfected. Europe—England particularly—cannot or will not believe that any enlightened nation in this twentieth century will willfully plunge our civilization into the horrors of such a war as Germany's leaders plan. There will be a fearful awakening—before very long. But what's all this to do with the case?"

Thorne smiled indulgently as he replied:

"I've been watching Overman pretty closely. As you know, I make it my business to observe everything and every one. He's a German."

I started. The first dim ray of light began to illumine the gloom in which this affair was enshrouded, though it only served to render the surrounding darkness in other directions more intense. But as Thorne marshaled his proofs I saw things with his eyes which had never struck me before.

"You've no doubt noticed the fashion he has at times of drawing himself up with his heels together; at least he starts to, but usually remembers himself and stops half through the performance?"

I nodded.

"I soon found, too," my friend went on, "that the

chauffeur and gardener were both Germans. Under other circumstances that wouldn't have meant much, either, for England, like our own America, readily accepts and employs foreigners. But what did we have as the facts stood? A British submarine inventor, a German ex-military officer masquerading as an Englishman and with German retainers, Holmden's death under such strange circumstances; and, to leaven the whole, what you and I know of Germany's spy system and intentions."

Then, as the full significance of what my friend was saying burst upon me, I cried:

"But, good heavens, Thorne, you surely don't mean to suggest that Overman is a cold-blooded murderer!"

The professor shrugged his shoulders.

"Why not? Granted he's German, he'd think everything he did for his fatherland justified. That sort of thing is a religion with your machine-made German officer and official."

I acquiesced dully, wondering what I should hear next.

"I made some interesting discoveries I shall tell you about in a minute as I poked around yesterday morning," he resumed. "By the time I sent off that wire I was pretty certain. When I got the reply I was absolutely convinced. Briefly this is what my American journalist friend in London wired me back: Holmden had turned his last submarine design into the admiralty the night before he came down here; he'd worked at Krupp's and come safely away with a good many of their greatest and most jealously guarded secrets; his heart and nerves were in a bad state, and a Harley Street specialist had warned him that the slightest shock might prove fatal; his rooms in London were burgled the very night he was done to death down here, but they got nothing there, for, as I've said, he'd turned in his latest work."

"What an irony!" I cried. "Then his death was for nothing."

"Not quite that. By it England has been robbed of one of her cleverest young submarine experts just when she needs him most. Furthermore, I don't doubt that Wilhelmstrasse had learned that Holmden had been at Essen and pried loose some of their pet secrets—some of the horrors they intend to launch upon the world when 'Der Tag' comes. They would argue that he would devote all his time to invent means to combat and nullify those secrets, and that therefore he was better off of the way. As I see it, the burglary of the poor fellow's rooms was only a side issue, undertaken on the chance they might get something before the law or his relatives took possession of his effects. But the real object was to remove Holmden. And I never knew anything so fiendishly clever and calculated so to arouse no suspicion of foul play."

"But how, how?"

Thorne leaned a little farther forward over his cane, his dreamer's eyes alight with the cold fire of his righteous anger and abhorrence, his thin-lipped mouth set in a stern, straight line.

"This is what I found yesterday morning. Our charming host has a fine workshop, which I took the liberty of overhauling pretty thoroughly. On a heap of shavings under the bench I found a few stray pieces of catgut. That gave me the clew to the

whole diabolical scheme. Catgut—Overman—that weird violin story—your hearing music in the night, followed by a scream—the wind blowing at the time—Holmden's precarious nervous condition rendering his death likely at the least shock. Can't you see how these puzzle pieces fit together?"

"I might in time, now you've made me a present of them."

"I did fit them together—right there. Have you ever heard of the Aeolian harp?"

Vaguely now I sensed what he was driving at.

"You mean the instrument played by the wind?"

"Exactly. It's easily made. One way is to get a long rectangular box, five or six inches wide by about three deep, fix beechwood bridges at the box ends and stretch across a dozen or so catgut strings tuned to a certain pitch. Then you've an Aeolian harp that will give off music whenever the wind plays over the strings. As the wind rises, the dissonances of the eleventh and thirteenth overtones make shrill discords, but as the gust dies away you get low, sweet harmonies."

"Just what I heard," I muttered.

"In the general excitement no one noticed me much, and I managed to get a few moments alone in Holmden's room. I found just what I expected. The box—the Aeolian harp—was let into the wall directly under the window sill, leaving a slight space between sill and strings to allow the wind free play. It would never be noticed, for the sill is so low that even I, who was looking for it, had to go down on hands and knees to find it. Besides, Overman had a slat of wood, painted just the color of the window casing fitted in over the infernal device till he was ready to use it. It was the fact that it was a windy night that sealed Holmden's fate. Some time that evening that slat was taken out. Knowing that the slightest shock would most likely kill Holmden, Overman told that horrible yarn."

"The callous, scheming devil!"

"He was all that. In the morning, when the deadly work was done, the slat was slipped back into place, covering up every trace. It would be brought in that Holmden had died of heart failure or something similar. All Overman had to do was to act his part fairly well."

"He certainly did it with consummate skill," I ejaculated fervently, remembering the scene in the death chamber.

"He may have been momentarily taken aback when you suggested my investigating the affair, though I doubt it. Even so, a moment's reflection would convince him that he was quite safe. Besides, he would be afraid of arousing suspicion by refusing. And if we had learned anything, he calculated on 'removing' us in some equally clever fashion. But he guessed wrong. Yesterday afternoon—leaving you to make quite sure no one removed the device, though I don't think at that time they would have troubled—I went and laid the entire affair before the county police. They were inclined at first to be incredulous, but I clinched it when I showed them the wire from London. They arranged to surround the house at night while I was to force Overman to uncover himself so that they could get him with the goods. Then I sent a long wire to the British foreign office."

"But how did you force Overman's hand?"

"You remember my asking at dinner if you'd read Thomson's 'Castle of Indolence?'"

"Yes—I thought it irrelevant at the time."

"It wasn't." The professor smiled grimly. "After finding the Aeolian harp contrivance I made a long cast. I went to Overman's library, and there, sure enough, was the 'Castle of Indolence.' There's a passage in it that brings in the Aeolian harp; it was heavily marked. I picked up a scientific encyclopedia. There, again, the paragraphs telling how to make such a harp were marked. My remark let him know that I was at least on the track. After that I knew he'd move the thing away that night. Then most likely they'd try and 'remove' us. What he didn't know was that I'd got the police outside with a system of signals by whistle all arranged."

"But how did it come to play while we were in the room if the slat was in?"

"I took it out just as I heard him come to the door. I hoped that the sound of the music would unnerve him for the few seconds necessary to land him safely. He stuck his knee into the pit of my stomach, though, and put me out for a while. Then he got you down, and you've only your own quickness to thank for the fact that you got the crack on the head I meant for him. He was out of the room like a shot."

"Then I've got you and your confounded cane to thank for this," I remarked, ruefully fingering the ever-growing lump behind my ear.

"I'm afraid so, Dixon. But I wanted to catch him absolutely red-handed. The whole thing was so wildly improbable on the face of it that I felt nothing short of that would convince the authorities. Now let's get an hour or two's sleep before this thing winds up," he concluded, rising.

I was glad enough to get to my room, but it seemed that hardly had my head touched the pillow before I was summoned to an early-morning conference downstairs. Thorne was with the police superintendent and a tall, fair, impassive-faced man whom I recognized at once as a British government official. The latter turned his cold blue eyes upon me keenly as I entered.

"Please tell Mr. Dixon what you've just told me," said Thorne to the superintendent, after introducing me as his aid and ally.

"Our men got Overman," said that officer in his abrupt, official manner. "But he was a bit too quick for them. He shot himself. The other two are under arrest pending instructions from the government," and he glanced in the direction of the tall Englishman.

"We know Charles Overman's real name to be Karl Obermann," said the last-named individual. "The government will not appear as far as he's concerned. It may be supposed that Holmden has died of heart failure—as he really did; that for some unknown reason Overman shot himself, either deliberately or by accident, or was shot by some one else. No hint of the truth must be permitted to get aboard. I rely on you gentlemen to keep your knowledge of this affair to yourselves. For the rest Wilhelmstrasse may discover as best they can what has become of Number 55."

"One thing more, Thorne," I said, breaking the long silence that had fallen as we were left alone.

"Yes?"

"Was there any truth at all in that wild yarn about the violin; or was it just part of the plot?"

For a few moments my friend did not answer. "I cannot say," he replied slowly at length. "I've known of stranger things—things to which all our modern discoveries afford no solution. And, if it were true, the violin lived up to its reputation. Death followed it here, as it had followed it everywhere else."

As I went upstairs to pack up and leave that ill-omened house I saw Thorne go across the hall to the large log fire burning there. He was carrying the violin. He dropped it into the blaze and turned to come upstairs.

The Old Loves.

By Albert Owens.

THESE things are older than the hills, my dear;

So old that all we say and do and feel

Each tender word, each passionate appeal

Graced other loves in every mortal year.

But need these thoughts close up our hearts with fear?

Beyond where planets after planets reel,

Beyond the world of clanging flesh and steel,

The old loves rouse themselves and gather near.

In Cleopatra's arms did Antony

Pledge passion far more ancient than the power

First wielded by the oldest Ptolemy . . .

And you and I in this delicious hour

Know all the wonder of that mystery

That might crush empires or a single flower?

These Gray Streets.

By Philip Kennedy.

ARE these the streets? They do not speak to me

With their old clattering tongues . . . all life seems fled,

And they are but the ghosts of things long dead

Whose warmth still lingers in the memory

Once every corner was a mystery,

Each tramp an oracle whose wisdom fed

My hungry soul by what it left unsaid. . . .

Ah! youth's courageous, frail philosophy.

These gray streets are but dull streets after all,

These houses built of crumbling wood and stone. . . .

Where is the charm I found at eventfall

When I came wandering here to dream alone?

This city seems an empty banquet hall

Whose splendid revelry and guests have flown.

The Haunted Landscape

ONLY once in my life did I experience contact with the supernatural, and the incident is still inexplicable, looked at from the materialistic standpoint. It happened in connection with the death of a close friend of mine, Jack Lindsay, the artist.

Jack was possessed of a stubbornly determined nature; he never gave up anything once begun, no matter how difficult the circumstances in connection with it. He was especially determined in regard to his painting; he often remarked, with a touch of quite natural melancholy in character with the observation, that death alone would stop him from reaching the highest point in his artistic career before he was thirty. He was about twenty-seven when he said that.

In discussing Jack's dogged grit with a common friend, Doctor Wilcott, the latter said: "If Jack lives to be forty he will already have become famous." When I replied that Jack had declared it his intention to make a name for himself by the time he was thirty, our friend assented thoughtfully. "I believe he will make the attempt," he granted; "but he has no time to lose."

The last time I saw Jack was just before he went away on one of his frequent sketching trips. When he mentioned his itinerary, I found he was passing within a few miles of a city where a cousin of mine was living, and I penciled a few words of informal introduction on the reverse of one of my cards, which, however, as afterward transpired, he never presented. He left me, apparently in high spirits, and although I heard nothing from him for a couple of months, I thought nothing of it because he was a notoriously poor correspondent.

Then I received a notice that shocked me to the soul. The police of a certain small town had found a dead body, presumably his, in the woods, where it had lain for weeks. Their supposition was that the young artist had taken his own life, as there were no marks of violence upon the body, and apparently nothing had been removed from the pockets. My card had served to identify him. His sketching paraphernalia in its entirety had been located at the home of a farmer of the neighborhood, Pete Grimstead, one of those "poor but honest" countrymen in which America abounds.

The farmer declared that several weeks back the artist had stopped at the house for something to eat;



By
Grege La Spina

that after lunch he asked permission to leave his sketching outfit, as he wished to take a stroll through the woods without it. Grimstead had put the things into the "front room,"

which, as any one who is at all acquainted with country people knows, is rarely used by them. Naturally they had forgotten all about the things until the hue and cry was made upon the discovery of the artist's body, when they had immediately notified the police and given up the dead man's effects.

Both the farmer and his wife had declared that they were glad to get rid of the things. Asked why, they said they didn't know, but they felt there was something queer about them. And they did seem relieved to have the last vestige of the unfortunate man's visit removed from their house.

I did not like the idea of Jack's having committed suicide on the verge of a promising career; it was quite out of character with what I knew of him. But Grimstead and his wife were well regarded in their vicinity, and there seemed no reason to suspect that anything other than suicide or an accident of some kind had happened to poor Jack. However, the thought clung to me and persisted in obtruding itself the rest of the day when I was back at the country hotel, that there was much more back of the affair than appeared on the surface. The coroner persisted in his belief that it was a case of suicide, although I begged him to let it go down on the records as death by accident.

You know how it is when you suddenly feel an antipathy to a person without the slightest foundation for your feelings. Well, I simply "felt" that Grim-

stead and his wife knew more about Jack's tragic death than they had related, and the more I thought it over the more strongly was I convinced in my intuition. There was something I didn't like about the hanging head of the farmer; something shifty in the wife's eyes and unpleasant in the constant restless rubbing and twisting of her thin, gnarled hands. I determined to ferret out the secret hidden back of their apparently simple story.

Jack's effects were turned over to me, in lieu of relatives, and I put them in my room at the hotel. That night I set up the easel and put the landscape on it; I wanted to look at my friend's last piece of work while I strove to untangle the threads of thought which threatened to become hopelessly knotted. I lit my pipe and sat back comfortably, reflecting sadly on poor Jack's sudden and tragic death, the while my eyes took in the salient features of the landscape before me.

It was a carelessly executed bit of work, quite unfinished as yet on the right-hand side. The left side showed a bit of country with woods beyond and plowed fields toward the center. At the right appeared the roughly sketched-in outlines of a house. And it was upon this house that my attention became fixed as I smoked and reflected. Perhaps I grew drowsy; perhaps it was a case of auto-suggestion; perhaps it was the powerful will of my friend projected no one knows how. Whatever it was, the longer I looked at that house the clearer the outlines grew. Such is the magic of the imagination that it seemed to me that an invisible brush was working over the house, dashing in a bit of color here, a touch there, until the whole house stood out clearly before my eyes.

I realized that I was hardly normal; that my long reflection on my friend's death had resulted in my becoming half drowsy, half languid; but I dreamily contemplated the picture, watching it come up, as it were, under my intent gaze, from a mere sketch into a finished piece of work. All that I saw I attributed to the vivid working of an overstimulated imagination, but at last something happened in that picture which by no means could have been attributed to imagination. *A light sprang up within the house and shone through one of the windows!*

II.

I RUBBED my eyes, leaned forward, taking my pipe from my lips, and looked intently, incredulously. There was no mistake about it; there was an actual flicker of light from behind one of the half-closed shutters of a window toward the rear of the house. I pinched myself vigorously and felt the pain with waking nerves, but the light did not fade away; it shone steadily on.

I whipped the picture from the easel and turned it over. It was an ordinary canvas, such as Jack had always used. A cold chill began to play down my spinal column as I returned the picture to the easel. I realized that there was in truth something unearthly about my friend's landscape; the farmer and his wife had been correct in their assertions that there was something supernatural and queer about it. I did not blame them for wishing to be rid of such a strange and unusual painting.

As for myself, I felt certain that there was something more than appeared upon the surface of this supernatural manifestation. I held myself rigidly alert, watching that strange and weird lighting of a painted landscape. I was aware that there was a Presence in the room with me and that there was something, some message, which it desired to impart; but while I held myself open for the intuitional reception of such a message, I could not restrain the cold shiver that went over me at the realization of the propinquity of the disincarnate, although I realized that my old friend could mean no harm to me.

I kept my eyes upon that mysteriously lighted window. As I watched, suddenly the door of the house seemed to open, and the light from within streamed out along the path before it. Simultaneously a shadow fell across the shaft of light, projected by moving figures within, and there appeared in the doorway a dark mass that, as it issued, could be distinguished as three figures. I strained my eyes to see the better. Good heavens, it was the figures of a man and a woman, carrying between them the limp body of another human being! As the significance of this flashed through my mind, they stopped on the threshold to close the door, shutting out the stream of light from the path. But as they passed the lighted window, where the path wound past it to the front gate, I saw, outlined against it in a broken but unmistakably familiar silhouette, the face of the honest farmer who had last seen my poor friend alive!

In my excitement I cried aloud. "You shall have justice, Jack!" I exclaimed.

The light in the window faded slowly away, but the outlines of the house remained, as did all the color work invisible hands had brushed in before my startled eyes. And the painting remained as it is to-day, a finished picture, the last gift of my dead friend to me.

I sat back, filled with unutterable awe at what I had witnessed. I knew that my friend had not died by his own hand, nor had he fallen and injured himself mortally in the woods. I knew that he had been foully done to death by hands which I could, and would, identify. I cannot say that I was afraid during the period of that marvelous manifestation; no, it was fury I felt that my friend must lie under the accusation of suicide when he had in reality been the victim of a sordid crime. I knew that he had come back to me to justify himself and to point out his murderers. I determined that they should be brought to justice. But how?

III.

THE rest of the night I sat smoking pipe after pipe, going over all the circumstances of Jack's death as they had been presented to me by the police and by Grimstead and his wife. There was no flaw in the story of the latter couple; it was probable enough for the country constables to credit it readily. They had known Pete Grimstead and his wife for years, and had never seen anything to their discredit, save that they were poor and had a hard struggle for existence.

But—poverty is frequently the motive for crime. Yet what could have tempted them to kill a poor artist, who certainly had not carried on his person more than a few dollars? And the small amount

found upon his body might have been all in his possession at that time. What else could he have shown them that they might have envied? His watch? It was a dollar watch, the fob a knotted black silk cord. Nothing tempting about that. Moreover, it had been found upon his body. His cuff links? Plain white buttons.

The body had been fully clothed when found. Stop! I did not remember having seen his hat. There had been no hat, and Jack had always worn—it was his only extravagance—a superfine Panama. His hat! Perhaps here was the clew to the mystery. It was not until dawn that I finally retired to sleep brokenly, sure in my heart that I had found a clew that would eventually unfold the motive and the mystery of the crime. It could not be that my poor friend had been murdered, at the threshold of a promising career, for the sake of a Panama hat! But that the hat was closely connected with the real story of his death I was fully persuaded. I was filled with impotent fury, but I determined to get a good sleep and then to make a visit to Pete Grimstead's farm. I did not wish to present myself there with my brain stupid after a sleepless night.

It was late that afternoon when I walked up the path to the house I had seen pictured so strangely in poor friend's last painting. I had asked the local constable to drive me out, and I recognized it immediately as the scene of the crime. He sat waiting outside in the wagon until I should have completed my questioning. I felt as though I were in a dream as I stood upon the threshold from which I had seen, the night before, that guilty pair issuing. I knocked strongly.

It was the woman who answered. She opened the door slowly, and, as it appeared to me, cautiously. When she saw who it was she uttered a single choked exclamation, and shut the door sharply in my face. I heard her hurried footsteps retreating in the hall, and then the sound of her voice calling her husband from the back door.

I kept up an occasional sharp knocking. The constable, who had not seen the door opened, called out that I'd better go to the back door, so I stepped down to the path. As I turned the corner I saw the woman on the doorstep, her face absolutely gray in the soft afternoon light, her eyes straining anxiously toward the barn, from whence came the gruff call of her husband. When she heard my footsteps she turned abruptly, threw out her hands as if to ward off something, made as though to reënter the house, and crumpled up in a heap on the door stone.

I stood rooted to the spot, torn by conflicting emotions. She was a woman, an elderly woman, and I should have gone to her assistance. She was a woman—but perhaps her hands had been stained in the blood of my dearest friend! I stood coldly aloof, awaiting events.

It was her husband who lifted her from the ground, shooting a vindictive glance at me as he bent over her. I could see that he had been suffering mentally; yet I felt nothing but fierce pleasure at the sight. He was a murderer, and it was meet that he should experience mental torture until such time as he suffered the legal punishment that was his just due.

He carried the limp form into the house and laid

her down on a horsehair sofa in the front room. I followed him. The chill of that room penetrated my bones with a horrid suggestion of what had taken place there so short a time ago. He turned upon me with a sudden bracing of his shoulders and a tossing back of his head that reminded me against my will of a gallant stag driven at bay.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked, with such hopelessness in his tones that I could have felt pity for him in his plight had I not steeled my heart for what I had to do.

"I want to ask you a few more questions about the —the manner of my friend's death," I replied tensely, bending a piercing gaze upon him.

He took an involuntary step backward against the sofa where lay the unconscious partner of his guilt. The movement displaced a crudely decorated sofa pillow, one of two propped against either arm of the sofa. It slipped, and would have gone to the floor had he not thrown himself upon it with a desperate effort that seemed out of all proportion to the trifling incident.

"Well," he shot at me, but in an agitated manner, "what is it you want to know?"

He remained before the sofa, his attitude that of one who hides a secret or protects something helpless. Flashing through my mind came the subconscious memory of a glint of white under the pillow. With a quick movement I sprang to the sofa, and although the farmer flung himself simultaneously against me he was too late. I pulled the cushion away with determined hand and disclosed—Jack Lindsay's Panama hat!

IV.

I LOOKED at Grimstead with stern accusation. He regarded me with horror written large upon his weather-beaten countenance. His eyes were stricken; his shoulders, so courageously braced back a moment since in an assumption of innocence, sank in and stooped over. He was the very picture of confounded guilt.

Stepping to the door, I hallooed to the constable, who clambered out, secured the horse, and came hurrying up the path. Wordlessly I pointed to the hanging head of the guilty man and to the Panama hat, crushed up against the arm of the sofa. The officer stood with dropped jaw and straining eyes.

From the sofa came the moaning cry of the woman. "Tell them the truth, Pete! Oh, I told you it would have been better to have told it in the beginning! Such things are always found out."

The constable looked horror-stricken at me, and I looked triumphantly back at him. I had located the murderer when no one had so much as suspected a murder; I had vindicated my poor friend from the charge of suicide, under which his noble spirit had been unable to rest in peace.

The woman's voice went on weakly. "He came in here to get something to eat," she wailed. "We gave him his lunch. When he got up to go he put his hands suddenly to his heart, opened his mouth as if he were going to speak, and then fell right down on the floor. He was dead! Oh, believe it or not, he was dead! We didn't lay a hand on him. I don't know what killed him. But he was dead, in our house, and we

were afraid. We are poor. We were afraid of what people might think, because that very morning Pete plowed up the bag of coins he had lost thirty years ago. We wouldn't dare spend it. We were afraid we'd be accused of killing and robbing!" Her voice rose in a shrieking crescendo of agony: "Oh, believe it or not, it is true—every word I'm telling you is God's own truth!"

Her husband threw himself down beside her, hiding his face in his toil-worn hands.

"What did you do then?" I managed to ask, my head whirling.

Grimstead lifted a defiant face. "I don't suppose you will believe us," he said shortly and without bitterness, "but what my wife says is quite true. After he dropped and we found he was dead, we talked it over. We were afraid of what people might think. We decided to carry his body away to a distance and say he had left here for a walk and had never returned. I wish now," he added dejectedly, "that we had come out with the truth in the beginning. I suppose it looks worse for us now than it would've looked then."

The constable's eyes questioned me appealingly.

I touched the Panama hat. "And this?" I questioned.

"It fell off when we were carrying him away," said Grimstead dully. "We found it on the path when we came back, and we didn't dare go out there with it, so we hid it here."

"Why didn't you burn it?" queried the constable, astonished that this incriminating evidence should have been left in such a conspicuous hiding place.

Grimstead shrugged his shoulders. "We weren't guilty of anything. Why should we burn it? We never thought any one would come looking here. We'd have given it up with the other things, only it might have looked queer if we'd had his hat."

He looked directly at my companion then. "Well, why don't you arrest me?" he demanded.

Again the constable and I exchanged glances. By common consent we stepped out of the chilling atmosphere of the room into the soft light of summer afternoon.

"I must tell you," said the constable, "that I remember hearing, when I was a young fellow, that Pete Grimstead had the money ready to pay off the mortgage on his farm and lost it somewhere as he was plowing his fields. Hunt as he might, he could never lay hands on it again. There's never been anything against the Grimsteads, in all the time I can remember, except that they are poor and hard working, and that isn't really a crime. Of course, sir, if you feel that you want to go further in the matter," his voice died away, and his eyes questioned mine.

I thought hard and fast. Perhaps, after all, my poor friend's spirit had come to me not to bring murderers to justice, but merely to vindicate his own rep-

utation, he who had always intended to fight it out to the end, he who had determined to become famous before death cut short his career. As I came to this conclusion I felt a lightness of heart that convinced me I had arrived at the correct significance of Jack's manifestation.

At the expression on my face the man drew a long sigh of relief.

"I'm glad you aren't going to pile up troubles for them." He jerked his thumb toward the house. "I'm sure the story is just as they told it. Did your friend ever mention his having any heart trouble, now?"

Into my mind flashed Doctor Wilmott's words. "If he lives to be forty he will be a famous man," he had said.

As I recollected more or less distinctly, there had been a faint accentuation upon the word "lives."

"I believe they've told us the truth," I said heartily, meeting the other man's eyes frankly. "The only thing I want now is to have the record of suicide cleared up positively once and for all. I'm sure it can be done without implicating those poor unhappy people further."

The constable stepped to the door. "Better give me that hat," he suggested, his cheerful, matter-of-fact voice affecting both the stricken man and his wife with sudden hope. "I'm sure you don't want to be reminded of the affair any longer," and he put out his hand for the Panama, which he passed on to me. Then he stretched out his right hand wordlessly to Grimstead.

The farmer took it wonderingly, his expression incredulous. So much had he suffered from his own fears for weeks that he could hardly believe the matter entirely cleared up. Not so Mrs. Grimstead. With happy tears streaming down her cheeks, she said brokenly: "God bless you both for believing us!"

The records in town were changed when the constable returned, so that my unfortunate friend was no longer charged with suicide; his death was entered as heart failure. But no mention was made of the Grimsteads. The story they had given in the beginning stood in the records as true; only the constable, the coroner, and myself knew the real facts.

Upon my return to my home city I satisfied myself that Doctor Wilmott had indeed accented the word "lives;" he had examined Jack, and had told him that only with the utmost care could he expect to live longer than five or six years and that even this time might be cut short without a moment's notice.

As for the haunted landscape, it hangs on the walls of my room, one of the best examples of my dead friend's masterly art. There seems to be nothing mysterious about it now, for although I have often sat late, smoking, watching the half-closed shutters of the house, never again have I seen light streaming from the windows upon the pathway before the door.

Soldiers and Sailors Personal Relief Section

Conducted by a former officer of
the Adjutant General's department,
U.S. Army.

RIGHT on the heels of the announcement that the American Bar Association is about to make a thorough investigation of the "justice and adequacy of present court-martial law" has come the declaration by Secretary Baker that a "substantial reduction" in the great majority of present court-martial sentences will be made as the result of a general revision by a board of officers to be constituted in the office of the Judge Advocate General of the army.

It must be remembered, the president of the American Bar Association points out, that the Bar Association has nothing to do with the individual case. It is concentrating its attention on something more impersonal, but vastly broader and more lasting—the law itself.

"Our investigation has nothing whatever to do with individual cases except as they illustrate certain conditions or facts about the law. What the American Bar Association is interested in, in this as everything else, is the law. It is within the purposes of the American Bar Association to examine into laws which are inadequate and unjust, bring all the influence it can bear upon the legislative authorities to enact just laws, and bring about, as far as possible, an equitable and fair administration of them. We are asking, and setting ourselves to answer, certain questions about the present court-martial law.

"The general question is, is our court-martial law adequate and just? To know that we must know whether it is up to date. We must also know whether it meets actual conditions. To reach, in this case of court-martial law, the end I have mentioned as our general purpose, it will no doubt be necessary for our committee not only to make an examination into the law itself, but also to investigate the manner and the results of its administration.

"Secretary Baker and General Crowder have promised me that the fullest opportunity, and every assistance, will be given to our committee to ascertain the facts, regardless of whether they are favorable to the War Department or the contrary. But the impression that seems to be abroad, judging from the letters I have received, that the American Bar Association in-



tends to examine individual cases for the purpose of getting relief to individuals, is quite wrong. That would not be practical, and I do not believe that it will be necessary. The War Department is about to investigate those cases and to take such action as it can.

"Many very severe sentences have undoubtedly been administered under our court-martial law during this war. I haven't a doubt that much injustice has been wrought. Our question now is, what is the state of the law, and what are the inequalities of administration which are inherent in the law itself?

"It is quite possible that many mistakes have been made, many injustices brought to pass, without any one being to blame. Even if our court-martial law were adequate for the regular army—I do not grant that it is, but assuming that as a hypothesis—it would yet be a very grave and important question whether it would be the just kind of law to have for such an army as we actually possess in time of war. As a matter of positive statement, I don't grant anything about our court-martial law; we are about to make an investigation; after we have made it we shall state our conclusions. At present I only want to call attention to some conditions in regard to our army.

"The American Army, as it has been made up during this war, includes practically every kind of boy. Most of them are good boys. Most of them are high-spirited, independent American boys, accustomed to thinking and acting for themselves. Many of them, on the other hand, are country boys, or such boys as some of the lads from the southern mountains, utterly unused to any of the conditions of army life. They not only are not used to discipline, but are unable to grasp the idea of what orders mean. There have been many cases in our army that might be called disobedience that were really due to the fact that the boys hadn't the slightest conception of what they were being called upon to do.

"Now it is not fair to expect of the young man fresh from the farm or the city office the same attitude to discipline that you find in the regular soldier. Moreover, that same spirit of independence that exists among the soldiers of our great army is the very morale of our troops. If the court-martial law tries to break that spirit, it is not an up-to-date and practical law.

"Of course, there are some vicious men in the American Army; there are always some vicious men everywhere; but they are very few. And the fact remains that, however you look at it, the flower of our young manhood has been in our army in this war.

"Another point that I want to mention is the matter of the young officers. When I was in Washington the other day I asked a man I knew, at the head of one of the army departments there, how many officers he had had at the outbreak of the war. He said, 'Seventy-nine.' 'How many have you now?' I asked, and he answered, 'Eleven thousand.'

"Now that sums up the whole matter. The vast majority of the officers in our present army are men who have never had any military training beyond their few weeks in camp. Many of them are very young. They have not had those years of hard work at military preparation that sets the regular-army officer apart from his men, as an officer thoroughly trained to lead. They are set to administer discipline, and in case of trouble to serve on court-martial, among young men who may be better educated, older, more experienced than they, and who have had almost as much military life and training.

"I do not for an instant mean to belittle the fine spirit of these young officers. What I do mean to say is that, without being actually at fault at all, they may very readily make mistakes. And what I want to point out is that there may be something radically wrong with the court-martial law in the face of such conditions as I have just mentioned. To repeat a very important question—is our law up to date?

"I think it is important that the American Bar Association should be undertaking this investigation," Mr. Page added, "because it certainly ought to be examined into from the civilian point of view. You know military men and civilians rarely see alike in such matters."

Although cases of conscientious objectors are among those of which the American Bar Association has received complaints, it is not likely, Mr. Page said that that matter will be taken up by the organization's investigators.

"Those cases come under the list of individual questions. I rather regret that this matter of the conscientious objector has been injected into this situation at all," he said.



Questions and Answers.

ANXIOUS.—Question: Am I exempt from the compulsory allotment to my wife when I have a divorce decree that grants no alimony?

Answer: Treasury Department Decision 10, W. R., December 10, 1917, states: "Where an enlisted man is divorced and the decree grants custody of the children but no alimony to either wife or child, upon application to Bureau of War Risk Insurance, the soldier may be exempted from compulsory allotment. The application must state name and address of divorced wife, and supported by evidence showing good cause, including certified copy of divorce decree, and such other information as the Bureau may require. The compulsory allotment is required where alimony had been decreed by court."

T. P.—Question. I am in a quandary about home affairs. My mother is quite ill and the girl to whom I am engaged is going with another chap. I want to marry her, but until my mother is well I cannot take care of a wife. I have had two years' service, including fourteen months in France. Upon my return I found my position waiting for me, and stepped right into it without a week's delay.

Answer: If the girl you love doesn't think enough of you to wait until your mother recovers, I advise you to forget her just as quickly as you can. There are plenty of fine women in the world, and surely any man who has returned from "over there" with a clean record has a splendid chance to find an honest life partner.

S. L. O.—Question: I have been a corporal for six months, and no matter how hard I try I do not seem to be able to secure a promotion. Can you tell me what to do? I have chosen to remain in the army and I want to become a higher noncommissioned officer.

Answer: It may be that a misunderstanding exists somewhere. Perhaps your first sergeant is laboring under the delusion that you are not working hard enough or that you "try to put things over on him." Have a chat with him at the first opportunity. He will listen to you. Do not forget that the chap who remains in the Regular Army is up against pretty stiff competition. I recall making pay rolls of three hundred men in New Orleans during the fall of 1918. Each one had been in service over five years—some as long as twenty-five. They had been in Panama. Let me tell you they were *men!* To become a non-com in that crowd required brains and *brawn*.

LOST.—Question: I want to get in touch with a relative whose address I have not been able to locate. What do you suggest in this case?

Answer: Give us your full name and present address, with any other necessary particulars, and we will include it in this section. It may be that the missing relative will see your name and write to you.

"Around the World"

Queerest of Bulls is Found in a Cave.

This is the story of Yager, who is one wonderful bull.

Yager is nine feet long, thirty inches tall, and walks on peg-shaped legs eighteen inches long. Yager resembles ordinary bulls in about the same way as day resembles night and an elephant a peanut.

Yager is a cave bull. Until recently he never saw the light of day, except at rare intervals. He subsisted on moss, crawfish, insects, and other eatables which are to be found in the recesses of a cave.

Yager's peculiar history, briefly suggested in this sketch, is vouched for by J. W. Crow, owner of Percy's cave, seven miles northwest of Springfield, Mo. Mr. Crow captured Yager by a clever device about four months ago. He placed him on exhibition at the J. C. Dysart mule barn here, and the hundreds of persons who saw Yager admitted that he was "some bull."

According to Mr. Crow, Yager's tracks were seen in the cave 'way back in '67.

Altitude Record is Now Thirty Thousand Five Hundred Feet.

Chief honors for altitude flight in an aeroplane belong to Captain Lang, of the British Royal Air Force, who on January 2d reached the record height of thirty thousand five hundred feet, or more than five and three-quarter miles. The feat was performed from Martlesham, near Ipswich, England, in a two-seater biplane fitted with an engine of British design and make. Previously the altitude record had been held by Captain R. W. Schroeder, an American pilot, who ascended from the Wright aviation field last September 18th to a height of twenty-eight thousand feet and descended near Canton, Ohio.

Captain Lang carried Lieutenant Blowers as a passenger and observer. Both men were frosted during the flight, and when it was over, having had the hardihood to disclose what he had done, Captain Lang was arrested for the offense of talking of the details without authority from his superiors.

They started the flight in moderate weather. At two thousand feet the temperature dropped below freezing. A height of twenty-five thousand feet was made in thirty-eight minutes and twenty seconds, and the reading of thirty thousand five hundred feet was made when they had been aloft sixty-six minutes and fifteen seconds.

At twenty thousand feet, feeling faint, Lieutenant Blowers turned on the oxygen supply, and again, at twenty-six thousand feet, he tried to give himself extra oxygen without relief. Then he found that the pipe connecting with the oxygen bottle had been broken by the vibration of the machine. He tried to notify Captain Lang of their plight, but collapsed before he could pass a written message to him, and Lang, who had

not been seriously affected, kept mounting the machine, in ignorance of the mishap of his observer.

Lang's first notion of trouble came at a height of twenty-eight thousand feet, when his heating apparatus acted erratically. At twenty-nine thousand feet he was aware of the shortage of oxygen, but he was out for a record that would stand, and kept on. It does not appear how high he might have flown if he had been unchecked, but at thirty thousand five hundred feet the petrol could not reach the engine, the pressure of the air being too slight to drive the small propellers connecting the petrol tank and the oil pump, and, of course, the engine stopped and the descent began.

On the way down Lieutenant Blowers regained consciousness at a height of ten thousand feet. He had to go to a hospital on landing, with frozen hands and toes. Captain Lang had his fingers and face frost-bitten.

"Spirit Magistrate" Sentences Prisoners.

A life sentence imposed by "divine agency!"

Mrs. Gertrude M. Gibbons, who held herself responsible for her husband's death in Los Angeles, and Francisco Lopez, self-confessed thief of Oakland, Cal., share this weird experience.

To both of them five hundred miles apart, in jail cells, on the same day came this occult conviction, reformation, and decree of atonement, according to their separate stories.

The woman, freed by mundane courts, and the man, facing a prison term, are preparing to carry out the sentence.

It is: "To devote your life to those less fortunate than you."

Mrs. Gibbons admitted having purchased poison for her sick husband so that he might end his miseries. She said she did it in the belief that his spirit would immediately enter the body of a new-born babe and that he would be happy.

Autopsy findings, however, failed to reveal traces of poison, and she was released from a murder charge.

Divine guidance, she says, has changed her warped moral code.

Lopez, a Mexican Indian, was led to confess his crimes after having been twice visited in his cell by a shining spirit.

Here are their stories, curiously alike, in the main:

BY MRS. GERTRUDE GIBBONS.

I am a different woman. The month in jail has made a big change in my moral code.

I have never thought that I was wicked, and still do not think so. But I may have had a perverted moral code.

I wouldn't provide any one with poison with which he might end his life, with my new vision. But I did not think it was wrong before. Frank was suffer-

ing. His life was a burden. And it seemed the only thing to do for him.

It isn't because of my fear of man's laws and punishment. I have been brought closer to God, and I can see now that it is His divine plan and not our poor mortal ones that must be worked out. When He is ready, He will call us. It is not for us to say when the life shall end.

The theory of the lawyers is that it was not cyanide which my husband took, but some harmless substitute which the druggist sold me in place of the poison.

I believe it was the hand of God in the matter.

I am a stronger and better woman for the experience, and I expect to make more of my life because I have had it.

It was the means of bringing me to God. And for that no price is too much.

I propose to go out into the world and help those less fortunate than I.

BY FRANCISCO LOPEZ.

When I saw the figure I tried to scream. Then I tried to speak, to say something to know that I was awake, but I could not articulate a word. All I could do was stare, spellbound, at the divine apparition, until it gradually faded away. Then I fell on my knees and prayed and cried, and I felt fear and happiness mingled.

The first night the image was reflected on the wall, the second time where the washstand stood.

Then I jumped from bed, and knelt and prayed, and I knew then that I was not the victim of some hallucination. I prayed all the rest of the night, not only for me, but for the rest of humanity, asking for forgiveness of our sins.

In the morning I prayed to God to bring to me the officers that were investigating my case, so that I could make a clean breast to them.

Soon they came and I confessed to them all, and I felt then so contented in my heart. I told them all that I had seen. Whether they believed it or not I do not know.

I am converted and have sworn off all my habits, and if I happen to outlive my sentence in San Quentin I will dedicate the rest of my life to the task of helping to bring to the right road all sinners like myself, and so earn my salvation.

Crowder's Draft Report.

Enoch H. Crowder, provost marshal general of the United States, who organized and subsequently directed the military draft machinery, has completed his task. He submitted to the secretary of war a few days ago his completed report of the part which the selective draft played in the winning of the European war.

"On page 305 of that report," General Crowder said to the writer, "is my valedictory, so to speak."

He thereupon picked up the official copy of the report and read the part referred to. It is as follows:

"It is true that the raising of the army by the selective draft was a measure which touched every home, every shop, every factory, and every farm in the country; and, therefore, there was a natural and universal popular interest in the processes of the draft. Never-

theless, this popular interest might have been that of mere curiosity, or it might have been one of sullen distrust or resistant hostility. In fact, it was one of active sympathy and desire to help. The obvious fairness of the system; its direct relation to the raising of the army, and, therefore, to the winning of the war, and the opportunity for service which it presented to those who were not qualified to give direct help to the fighting forces in other ways—these features enabled the system to rely upon the voluntary assistance of thousands upon thousands of men and women who gladly 'did their bit' to help raise the army.

"As one surveys the ever-widening circles of citizens who thus contributed in the work of the system, the boundaries become more indefinite between the various groups of persons who gave their help for a longer or shorter time, until finally the numbers become countless. The closing impression left upon the mind is one of profound gratitude and satisfaction—gratitude for the destiny which has given us an entire people united in hearty support of the war, and satisfaction in the revelation that a peaceful nation, ambitious only for its own prosperity and happiness, can none the less be relied upon in time of national danger to devote itself to the task of raising a defensive army.

"We are now," continues General Crowder in his report, "too close to the events of the war to assess them accurately. How great a part the American selective service played in the drama of the World War history alone can tell.

"The 'work-or-fight' principle," he says, "had been only sparingly applied when the war ended, but it had already succeeded in cleaning out the idle class and the small group of occupations that were declared to be nonproductive. The labor thus diverted turned, perforce, to the field of necessary or productive industry. The shipyards, for example, were materially aided by the augmentation of labor in them. We had only to extend the scope of the work-or-fight regulations to produce their added effectiveness. As time went on, more and more occupations were to be catalogued as nonproductive, and the evacuation of labor from them would have been initiated. The labor thus affected turns for reemployment naturally to the fields of highest wages, and since the highest wage scale is found in the purely war-time industries, the labor thus diverted turns almost as a unit to these very industries. Thus, at one stroke, would be accomplished the elimination of the nonproducer and his transformation into the most effective producer.

"The problem of the alien was fraught with many intricacies. It was in this field that were encountered not only the subtle efforts of the imperial German government to insinuate its intrigues into our armed forces, but also—and this was the larger and infinitely the more complicated side—the diplomatic situations arising out of relations with our allies and the neutral nations.

"Truly were we the melting pot of the world; and the cosmopolitan composition of our population was never more strikingly disclosed than by the recent events of the World War. Then the melting pot stood in the fierce fires of the national emergency; and its

contents, heated in the flames, either fused into the compact mass or floated off as dross.

"The great and inspiring revelation here has been that men of foreign and of native origin alike responded to the call to arms with a patriotic devotion that confounded the cynical plans of our arch-enemy and surpassed our own highest expectations. No man can peruse the muster roll of one of our camps, or the casualty list from a battlefield in France, without realizing that America has fulfilled one of its highest missions in breeding a spirit of common loyalty among all those who have shared the blessings of life on its free soil. No need to speculate how it has come about; the great fact is demonstrated that America makes Americans.

"In the diary of a German officer, found on the battlefield, the following sentence, penned by one of the enemy whom these men went out to fight, speaks volumes: 'Only a few of the troops are of pure American origin; the majority are of German, Dutch, and Italian parentage. But these semi-Americans—almost all of whom were born in America and never have been in Europe—fully feel themselves to be true-born sons of their country.'

"On the other hand, not the least valuable of the lessons of the draft is its disclosure that to-day there are certain portions of our population which either will not or cannot unite in ideals with the rest. We have welcomed to our shores many who should be forever denied the right of American citizenship."

In a reference to the loyalty of the aliens who fought in the American army, General Crowder recites the instance of a certain camp which included, in October, 1918, 1,589 alien soldiers. These men were given an opportunity to secure release on alienage grounds. The number that asked for discharge was 289, and of these 139 were enemy subjects. Only twenty-four men who were of cobelligerent nationality asked for discharge. Of the neutral subjects and citizens forty-two per cent requested release from service.

Buried in Coffin Built by Himself.

"I want a good coffin when I die. Those made in factories are cheap affairs," Colonel James Shields, aged seventy-four, of San Antonio, Tex., told a few friends when he began work upon a casket and shipping box.

That was last November. Colonel Shields died suddenly and his body was sent to Big Rapids, Mich., his former home, attired in a suit of clothes his wife made for him and incased in the coffin he built with his own hands. The Shields for many years have made their own coffins.

Colonel Shields was a Canadian and was a member of the Queen's Guards when Queen Mary of England visited Canada many years ago. At two towns in Ohio, later, he lived next door to William McKinley. All his life Colonel Shields was in the real-estate business. He was the oldest Elk in this portion of Texas.

Unsolved Murder Excites St. Louis.

Within the very shadow of the Cathedral of St. Louis, Mo., and in one of the most fashionable districts of the city, a murder was committed which surpasses in its mystifying details and horrors anything

of recent years in local police circles. The entire city was stirred by the strange crime.

Mrs. Katherine Posey is the name of the woman in whose mansion—and it is veritably that—the murder was committed on a recent night. The victim is an unidentified man whose exceptional physical build leads to the belief that he may have been a pugilist. At first he was identified positively as Bob Devere, former claimant of the heavyweight championship of the world, but later developments tend to the belief that it is not he. The man is six feet two inches tall and of powerful physique.

Horribly mutilated, there are no less than fifty wounds on his face, hands, and body. The man's life was apparently beaten out with a hatchet, while a pocketknife must have been used with which to inflict the numerous small wounds. A bullet hole through the forehead shows where a revolver was fired at close range.

According to the story told the police by Mrs. Posey, a man whose name she gave as M. J. Connors, and whom the police have been unable to locate, called up her home and asked her if he might bring a party of friends out there for a late after-theater supper. She gave him this permission, and four men came to the house, in which were Mrs. Posey, a model named Katherine Kuhlman, and a negro maid.

The story told the police is that wine was served and the party ate, drank, and made merry until well toward morning. Mrs. Posey says that the man who was killed, and who was unknown to her, suggested that it was growing cold and said that if she would point out the furnace room he would bolster up the fire.

This she did, and then Mrs. Posey and the other women went upstairs to the washroom. They had been there only a few moments when a shot was heard, and, running to the head of the stairs, Mrs. Posey called out: "My God, what's the matter?"

To this Connors is said to have replied: "You women stay where you are, we will attend to this."

Mrs. Posey called the police, and upon the arrival of the latter they found the body of the unidentified man at the foot of the basement stairway in the condition which has been described. The other men of the party had flown, and all efforts to trace their whereabouts have thus far proven futile.

Copnors is a former State factory inspector. He is married and has two children. Shortly before the detectives arrived at his home the following morning Mrs. Connors and the children left the home, and they also are not to be located.

The dead man's clothing bore the name of an Illinois maker of clothes, and it is believed that he was from that State. Mrs. Posey told the police that the man had a large roll of money with him when he arrived at her home. No money was found on the person of the dead man.

Mrs. Posey is said to be immensely wealthy. The model, Miss Kuhlman, was recently named as a co-respondent in a divorce suit brought by the wife of a local banker against her husband.

The murder mystery is one which has completely baffled the local police authorities. Police all over the country have been notified to be on the lookout for

Connors, the mystery man of the affair, and although he is well known in all parts of Missouri and in the western half of Illinois all efforts to find the man have been in vain.

Belgian Relatives Live.

Mrs. Henry Verhelst, of Mason, Mich., has heard from her relatives in Belgium after a silence of about four years.

She had given them all up for dead. The letter contained the news that one brother had been taken prisoner by the Germans and had not been heard of since.

The sister who wrote told of the devastation wrought by the Germans and of the narrow escape she had had when a German bomb was dropped from an aeroplane just outside the window, where she was sitting in her house, and a number of people were killed and the house damaged.

When Mr. Verhelst last heard from Haarlebecke, his native town, the village was in ruins and his people had been obliged to flee for their lives. The letter recently received told of the death of his father.

Seek Lost Grave of Slain Sheriff.

The recent visit of Thomas Clark, of Miami, Okla., for a conference with John L. Lamb, one of the old-timers in the section of Douthat, Okla., reveals the fact that the grave of John Wilson, former sheriff of Labette County, Kansas, has been lost.

Wilson was shot to death in 1878 by Jason Morgan, notorious outlaw leader and desperado, and two of his bandits, Triplett and Clopton. The killing occurred on the Red Fork, west of Vinita, Okla., and the body was left unburied at the scene of the killing.

A monument was recently shipped to Chetopa to be placed over Wilson's grave, in the cemetery there. This memorial was sent from the East, the gift of relatives. In the forty years that have elapsed since the killing of Wilson all traces of his grave have been lost, and the Masons, of which order he was a member, are trying to locate the grave to pay tribute to his memory.

Mr. Lamb formerly was living in Chetopa, when Wilson was murdered, and he, with Doctor H. A. Irwin and S. B. Sloan, was delegated to find Wilson's body and convey it to that place. Wilson's body had lain on the ground where he was killed about a year, and it was found without much difficulty, although not much remained of it but bones.

It was identified by an umbrella found lying near the body, one which Wilson had been known to carry. The remains were taken to Chetopa and buried with Masonic honors.

But as the years passed and changes were made in the cemetery, the grave was lost. There is no record of the plats by which the grave can be located, and as Mr. Lamb has forgotten just where the body was buried, it is not likely that the grave will ever be found.

At the time Wilson was killed Captain John Secrist, a Star Route mail carrier, and a young man named Al Young, a clock peddler, were also killed.

In the killing of Secrist, Jason Morgan settled an old grudge. The clock peddler was slain because

Morgan and his pals didn't know what else to do with him.

At first Morgan was undecided what to do with Wilson. He said he hated to kill him because the sheriff was such a brave man. The three outlaws, leading Wilson's horse, with its owner mounted and under guard, went seven miles from where they killed Secrist and Young before they shot and killed him.

Secrist's body was recovered and interred in the Chetopa cemetery. Young's body was claimed by relatives and buried elsewhere.

Jason Morgan, the outlaw and murderer, was killed about two years later by a posse from Coffeyville, Kan. Morgan fought as long as he could. He was picked up, placed in a wagon, and hauled to Coffeyville, still alive, with fifteen rifle bullets in his body.

He died in a few hours after the party reached Coffeyville, and thus ended the career of one of the most desperate men who ever held up a train or shot up a town.

Allied Cooties Whipped Hun Rivals.

That cooties of the Allies could and did whip German cooties every time they got together, and that on many occasions the Yanks and poilus entertained themselves by staging battles to death between the "blood leechers" from different lands, is the story Corporal John Garpin brought back to the home folks in Dallas, Texas.

Corporal Garpin declared that an Allied cootie just would not keep company with a cootie which had seen service in Hun trenches and on Hun bodies any more than the Allied soldiers would associate with Hun prisoners.

"The cootie, even those of the Allied colors, is a hell of an animal," said Garpin, "but they have some self-respect and it is always war to death when cooties from enemy trenches get together."

Corporal Garpin said as soon as the Yanks learned this they began staking battles between American and Hun cooties and French and Hun bugs. He says the cooties were placed on a clean paper and the battle went on while the enthusiastic soldiers looked on and wagered their month's pay on the result. Garpin declared he saw many such battles, but never knew of a Hun cootie killing one of the Allied nations.

Soldier Gets Huge Mail in One Delivery.

A bountiful mail was the one Private Jack Kane, of the American Expeditionary Forces, received one day soon after the armistice was signed. According to his father, Martin Kane, assistant night foreman of the roundhouse in Susquehanna, Pa., Private Jack states:

"I haven't heard from you for many months, but you made good this a. m. when I received the day's mail—one hundred letters, three hundred newspapers, and four hundred cigarettes, all from the home folks."

According to the missive, the elder Kane had been sending his son letters, newspapers, and cigarettes several times weekly, but somehow they never reached their destination until they were all delivered in a lump sum.

Among Ourselves

Here we are with the June 1st number!

From the many letters and personal words of praise that we receive daily we are getting to be like the proud father who brags about the extraordinary growth and intelligence of his first child. But who can blame us? It is positively the first time in American literature that a magazine has *savely* attempted to publish the unusual and thrilling type of story, without developing into a "blood-and-thunder, kill-'em-quick" periodical. In *THE THRILL BOOK* we have accomplished the two ideals that we started our journey with—absolute excellence and out of the ordinary plots combined with the best style. You have read stories by Perley Poore Sheehan, Grege La Spina, Anna Alice Chapin, Robert W. Sneddon, Frederick Booth, Will Gage Carey, Andrew Soutar, S. Carleton, and many others. This list not only includes some of the well-known writers, but many who have never been heard of before. It shows that our intention is not to boost the writer already arrived, but rather to boost the story. We have sent back during this time literally hundreds of tales by those well known in the writing game, because our insistence upon the two ideals above mentioned have held us strictly to the job in hand. You will see in the forthcoming issues that this plan of action has worked out in a surprising way. Not only have we discovered one or two writers who will literally sweep you off your feet with the bizarre qualities of their stories, but we have found a number of popular men who furnished us with just exactly the type of story we want. It has cost us no end of time, trouble, and money, but a job well done is something to be proud of. After efforts that would sound improbable if we were to outline them, we have launched *THE THRILL BOOK*. As actions speak louder than words, we can refer you to these first seven numbers, or we can ask you to watch the news stands twice a month and get the issues as they appear.

We wish to thank our Honorary Editors for their conscientious cooperation in assisting us with letters of advice and personal messages of encouragement. As the official publication of the "World Wide Fiction Readers' Club," we have not fallen down. But we are not the least bit hesitant in saying that had it not been for the real assistance of our readers, we would never have "come across" in the way that we have. After all, it is dramatic and interesting to be a hermit on a mountain somewhere, living on herbs and grasses—that is, it is fine to read about such things. Candidly, however, we like to get right down with people where they live, and play, and dream, and give them what they want. If we had any other ideals beyond the two that we have catalogued, we would say that above all we wish to remain human, natural, and sympathetic. The very nature of this magazine makes this imperative. To succeed in the unusual you must have the unusual aspects of life brought closely to you so that you can appreciate them.

Our readers have proven to us that they were

weary of the drab and the dull in the ordinary periodical, and they have risen almost as one person to thank us for endeavoring to give them a magazine which filled their ideals of what a real magazine ought to be. If we had anchored like the hermit, crawled into a hole, and pulled the hole in after us, expressing vast ideals and then never fulfilling them, we would not deserve your sympathy should we need it. Honestly, we know that there are only two types of stories—good and bad—well done and poorly done. Having stripped ourselves for the battle, as it were, and having gotten down to brass tacks, we have learned that it pays to seek cooperation from one's readers.

Let us thank you, kind reader, for your criticism and your encouragement. Almost without exception your letters have been constructive in their advice. Some day we are going to print a number of these letters to show the public how much *THE THRILL BOOK* was needed.

To those who have not become regular readers of *THE THRILL BOOK*, just a word. You have read above just exactly what we are trying to do. It might be a good thing for you to start now and become a regular follower of what has developed into a truly American institution. You will find that we are not tied down to any system of propaganda or thought, but are merely producing fiction—the kind of fiction that you have wanted to read all your life, but haven't been able to find anywhere. You will notice that we are holding to a low price, and yet are giving you the maximum of reading matter. We waste no space in unnecessary departments or filters, but try to crowd each page with the best kind of story that can be procured in the world. It is not an easy matter, but, after all, nothing worth while is easily done. We are setting the highest standard that can be conceived, and we are growing still. If we couldn't get the type of story that we wanted, we would close down to-morrow and forget all about it. However, we have known for many years that the unusual, the fantastic, the bizarre, and the weird tales were floating about through the editorial offices without finding a home for the simple reason that editors thought they were not wanted by the public. It was a serious mistake. Is there a man living who would deny that Edgar Allan Poe was one of the greatest writers who has ever lived? And yet we ask you, could you find his type of story anywhere? No. It was frowned upon, it was relegated to the scrapheap. Many reasons can be given for this, the main one being that those who were furnishing stories had gotten out of touch with the New Reader. This has been proven to us absolutely by the letters we have received. We had no doubt about it in the beginning, but it has made us feel pretty good to know that we were right.

Like the engineer who knows that the track is clear, the signals set, and his engine in perfect order, we now are putting a strong hand on the throttle, and are going full speed ahead.

THE EDITOR.
